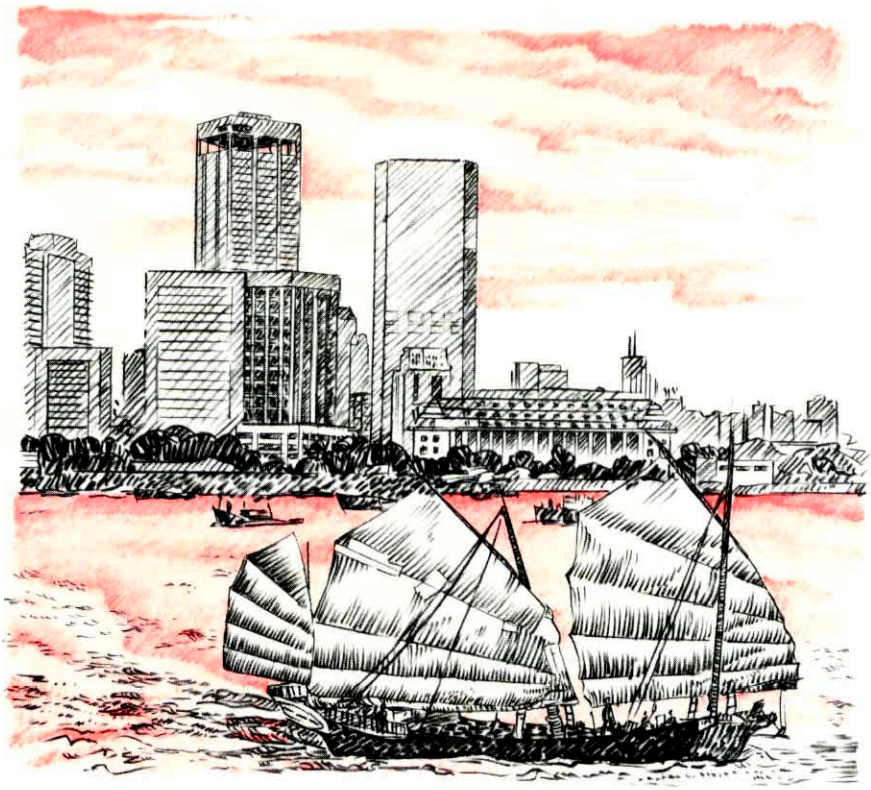
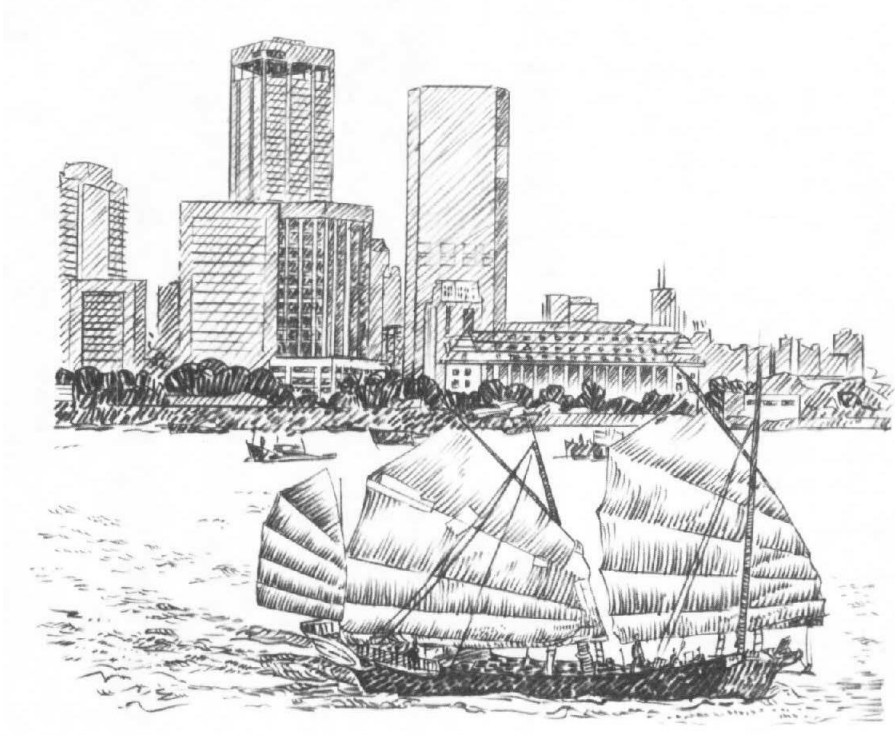
area handbook series

Singapore
a country study



Singapore
a country study

Federal Research Division
Library of Congress
Edited by
Barbara Leitch LePoer
Research Completed
December 1989



On the cover: Singapore past and present

Second Edition, 1991; First Printing, 1991.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Singapore : a country study / Federal Research Division, Library of Congress ; edited by Barbara Leitch LePoer.—2d ed.
p. cm. — (Area handbook series) (DA pam ; 550-184)
"Research completed October 1989."
"Supersedes the 1977 edition of Area Handbook for Singapore written by Nena Vreeland, et al."—T.p. verso.
Includes bibliographical references (pp. 285-301) and index.
1. Singapore I. LePoer, Barbara Leitch, 1941- II. Library of Congress. Federal Research Division. III. Area handbook for Singapore. IV. Series. V. Series: DA pam ; 550-184.
DS609.S55 1991 90-25755
959.57—dc20 CIP

Headquarters, Department of the Army
DA Pam 550-184

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

Foreword

This volume is one in a continuing series of books now being prepared by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress under the Country Studies—Area Handbook Program. The last page of this book lists the other published studies.

Most books in the series deal with a particular foreign country, describing and analyzing its political, economic, social, and national security systems and institutions, and examining the interrelationships of those systems and the ways they are shaped by cultural factors. Each study is written by a multidisciplinary team of social scientists. The authors seek to provide a basic understanding of the observed society, striving for a dynamic rather than a static portrayal. Particular attention is devoted to the people who make up the society, their origins, dominant beliefs and values, their common interests and the issues on which they are divided, the nature and extent of their involvement with national institutions, and their attitudes toward each other and toward their social system and political order.

The books represent the analysis of the authors and should not be construed as an expression of an official United States government position, policy, or decision. The authors have sought to adhere to accepted standards of scholarly objectivity. Corrections, additions, and suggestions for changes from readers will be welcomed for use in future editions.

Louis R. Mortimer
Chief
Federal Research Division
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20540

Acknowledgments

The editor and authors are grateful to numerous individuals in the international community, in various agencies of the United States government, and in private organizations who gave of their time, research materials, and special knowledge to provide data and perspective for this study. Especially appreciated are the helpful suggestions and economic insights of Edward Chesky and Morris Crawford and the generous assistance of the staff of the Embassy of Singapore, Washington.

The editor and authors also wish to express their appreciation to staff members of the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, whose high standards and dedication helped shape this volume. These include Martha E. Hopkins, who managed editing; Marilyn L. Majeska, who reviewed editing and managed book production; and Barbara Edgerton and Izella Watson, who did word processing. David P. Cabitto and Sandra K. Ferrell prepared the maps and other graphics for the book, Carolina E. Forrester reviewed the maps, and Arvies J. Staton contributed to the charts on military ranks and insignia. Special thanks go to Kimberly A. Lord, who designed the illustrations for the cover of the volume and the title pages of the chapters, and Donald R. DeGlopper, who assisted with many of the editorial duties.

The following individuals are gratefully acknowledged as well: Shari Villarosa of the Department of State for reviewing all the chapters; Mimi Cantwell for editing the chapters; Cissie Coy for the final prepublication editorial review; Joan Cook for preparing the index; and Linda Peterson of the Printing and Processing Section, Library of Congress, for phototypesetting, under the direction of Peggy Pixley. The inclusion of photographs in the book was made possible by the generosity of private individuals and public agencies, especially Ong Tien Kwan of Kuala Lumpur and Chiang Yin-Pheng and Joyce Tan of the Singapore Ministry of Communications and Information.

Finally, the editor and authors wish to thank Federal Research Division staff members Andrea M. Savada, Sandra W. Meditz, and Richard Nyrop for reviewing all or parts of the manuscript, and Robert L. Worden for assisting in the final stages of editing the completed manuscript.

Contents

List of Figures

Preface

The first edition of the *Area Handbook for Singapore* was published in 1977. Prior to that edition, Singapore was included in the *Area Handbook for Malaysia and Singapore,* which was published in 1965 just before Singapore became a separate, independent nation. The current volume, a complete revision of the 1977 edition, covers a period of remarkable economic growth and political stability for a nation in existence for only a quarter century. During the 1977–89 period, Singapore moved assuredly into the category of newly industrializing economy, and its renowned port grew from being fourth in the world in terms of volume of shipping to being the world's busiest port.

Singapore: A Country Study is an attempt to present an objective and concise account of the dominant social, economic, political, and national security concerns of contemporary Singapore within an historical framework. The volume represents the combined efforts of a multidisciplinary team, which used as its sources a variety of scholarly monographs and journals, official reports of government and international organizations, and foreign and domestic newspapers and periodicals. Brief commentary on some of the more useful and readily accessible English-language sources appears at the end of each chapter. Full references to these and other sources appear in the Bibliography.

The authors have limited the use of foreign and technical terms, which are defined when they first appear in the study. Readers are also referred to the Glossary at the back of the book. Spellings of Singaporean personal names used in the study conform to standard Singaporean usage, and contemporary place names are generally those approved by the United States Board on Geographic Names. All measurements are given in the metric system (see table 1, Appendix).

Country Profile

Country

Formal Name: Republic of Singapore

Short Form: Singapore

Term for Citizens: Singaporeans

Capital: Singapore

Date of Independence: August 9, 1965 (from Malaysia)

Geography

Location and Size: Located at narrow point of Strait of Malacca off southern tip of Malay Peninsula; connected with Malaysia by causeway. Land area in 1988 about 636 square kilometers, consisting

of one main island and 58 islets. Main island 42 kilometers long and 23 kilometers wide, with coastline of 138 kilometers.

Topography: Mainly low-lying, with hills reaching 165 meters in island's center. Extensive reclamation and landfill along coasts.

Climate: Tropical climate, with daily high temperatures moderated by sea breezes. Rainfall throughout the year but usually heaviest from November to January.

Society

Population: 2,674,362 in July 1989. Low birth and death rates; at some points in the 1980s, negative rate of population increase.

Languages and Ethnic Groups: Multiethnic population; 76.4 percent Chinese, 14.9 percent Malay, 6.4 percent Indian, 2.3 percent other. National language Malay but language of administration English. Four official languages—Malay, English, Chinese, and Tamil—but English predominates. Government policy for all citizens to be bilingual—competent in English and an Asian "mother tongue." Large resident alien population composed of unskilled laborers from neighboring countries and skilled managers and professionals from developed countries.

Religion: Religious diversity reflects ethnic diversity. Major religions in 1988: Buddhist, 28.3 percent; Christian, 18.7 percent: no religion, 17.6 percent; Islam, 16 percent; Daoist, 13.4 percent; Hindu, 4.9 percent; "other," 1.1 percent. Rapid growth of Christianity and decline of Chinese folk religion in 1980s.

Health: Conditions approach those of developed countries; adequate number of physicians and hospitals. Government enforces strict sanitation and public health regulations. Heart disease, cancer, stroke, and pneumonia major causes of death. In 1987 life expectancy 71.4 years for males and 76.3 years for females.

Education: British-inspired system with six-year primary and four-year secondary schools and two-year junior colleges for quarter of student population preparing for higher education. English primary language of instruction. Six institutions of higher education, government supported. Education system emphasizes English, science and technology, and vocational skills.

Economy

Salient Features: Export-oriented economy with large government role. Dependent on international trade, sale of services, export of

manufactures. Consistently high rates of economic growth (11 percent in 1988), balance of payments surplus, large foreign investment, large foreign reserves (S$33 billion in 1988), minimal foreign debt.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): S$47.9 billion in 1988, S$17,950 per capita. Manufacturing contributed 29 percent, financial and business services 27 percent, commerce 18 percent, transport and communications 14 percent, other services 12 percent.

Industry: Major industries: electronics, petroleum refining and petrochemicals, machinery, shipbuilding, and ship repair.

Foreign Trade: S$167.3 billion in 1988. Usual deficit in merchandise trade offset by surplus in services for positive balance of trade. Major exports: electronics, machinery, refined petroleum products. Major imports: machinery and electronic components, chemicals, fuels, and food. Major trading partners: United States, Japan, Malaysia, and European Community.

Exchange Rates: Singapore dollar allowed to float since 1973. In late 1989, US$1 = S$1.94.

Transportation and Communications

Ports: Port of Singapore, world's busiest port in 1988, serves more than 36,000 ships per year. Five port terminals, each specializing in different type of cargo; fifteen kilometers of wharf; extensive warehouse and oil storage facilities. Singapore has fifteenth largest merchant fleet in world.

Railroads: Malayan Railways provides service to Singapore. Main station in central business district. Major public transport 67-kilometer mass rapid transit system serving 800,000 passengers daily scheduled for completion in 1990.

Roads: 2,810 kilometers of roads in 1989, mostly paved; five expressways, totalling 95 kilometers, with total 141 kilometers by 1991.

Airports: Two major airports, Singapore Changi Airport for international flights and Seletar for charter and training flights, and three smaller fields.

Telecommunications: Excellent telecommunications facilities. Domestic telephone system with optical fiber network, 26 exchanges, and 48.5 telephones per 100 residents. Two satellite ground stations and submarine cable connections to neighboring countries.

Government and Politics

Government: Parliamentary system with written constitution. Unicameral parliament of eighty-one members (in 1989) elected by universal suffrage. President largely ceremonial head of state; government run by prime minister and cabinet representing majority of parliament. British-influenced judiciary; Supreme Court divided into High Court, Court of Appeal, and Court of Criminal Appeal. Subordinate courts include district courts and magistrate's courts.

Politics: Nineteen registered political parties in mid-1980s, but People's Action Party (PAP) won every general election from 1959 to 1988, usually holding every seat in parliament. Opposition parties divided and weak. Lee Kuan Yew prime minister from 1959 through 1989, providing unusual continuity in leadership and policy. PAP policies stressed economic development, government management of economy and society, firm government with little tolerance for dissent.

Administrative Divisions: Unitary state with no second-order administrative divisions. Some advisory bodies based on fifty-five parliamentary electoral districts.

Foreign Relations: Primary goals of maintaining sovereignty, stability in Southeast Asia, and free international trade. Member of Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Commonwealth of Nations, Nonaligned Movement, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, United Nations.

Media: Seven newspapers, five radio stations, and three television channels publishing and broadcasting in four official languages. Government operates radio and television and supervises newspapers.

National Security

Armed Forces: In 1989 regular armed forces of 55,500: army—45,000, air force—6,000, navy—4,500. Reserves totaled 182,000, and 30,000 in People's Defence Force, a national guard. All males eligible for conscription at age eighteen; most conscripts served twenty-four to thirty months active duty, with reserve obligation to age forty for enlisted personnel and fifty for officers.

Military Units and Equipment: Army composed of one active and one reserve armored brigade, three active and six reserve infantry brigades, two commando battalions, and seventeen artillery

battalions. Equipment included light weapons, light tanks, armored personnel carriers, and 155mm howitzers. Navy had corvettes, missile craft squadrons, patrol squadrons, transport ships, and minesweepers. Major weapons were Gabriel and Harpoon ship-to-ship missiles. Air force had twenty F-16 fighter-bombers on order for early 1990s, and in 1989 had estimated 125 combat aircraft in 6 squadrons and 60 helicopters. Air defense provided by army and air force antiaircraft artillery and by Bloodhound 2, Rapier, and HAWK surface-to-air missiles.

Military Budget: In 1988 estimated at US$1.003 million, 6 percent of Gross National Product (GNP).

Foreign Military Relations: No formal military alliances or treaty relations, but participated in Five-Powers Defence Agreement with Britain, Malaysia, Australia, and New Zealand. Shared integrated air defense system with Malaysia. Singapore armed forces trained in or held joint exercises with Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Taiwan, and Australia.

Police: In 1989 regular force of 7,000 supplemented by 3,000 conscripts assigned to police and 2,000 citizen volunteers. Additional forces provided by 300-member Port of Singapore police and Commercial and Industrial Security Corporation whose 2,000 armed guard and escort personnel had police powers. Prison security and security force reserve provided by 700-member Gurkha contingent.

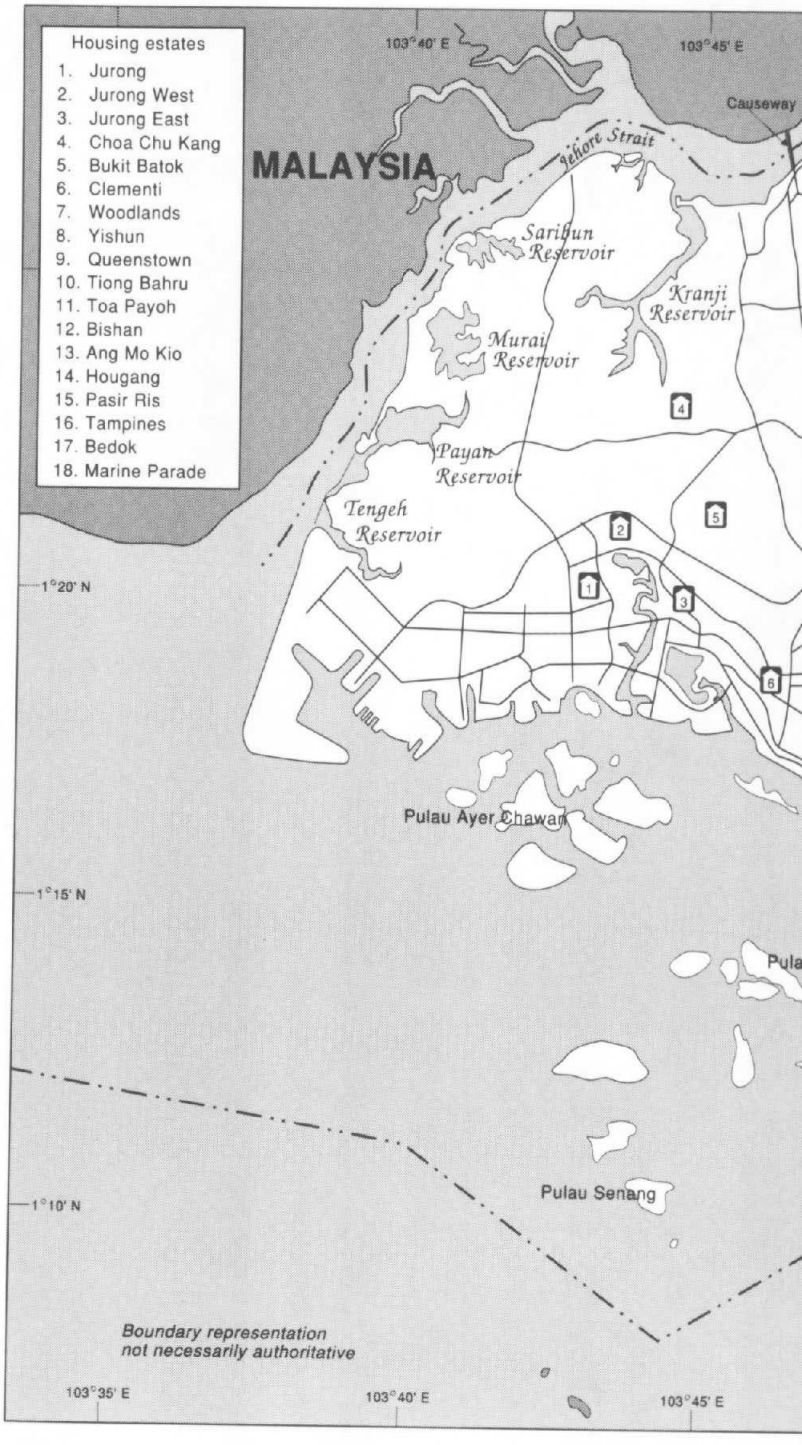
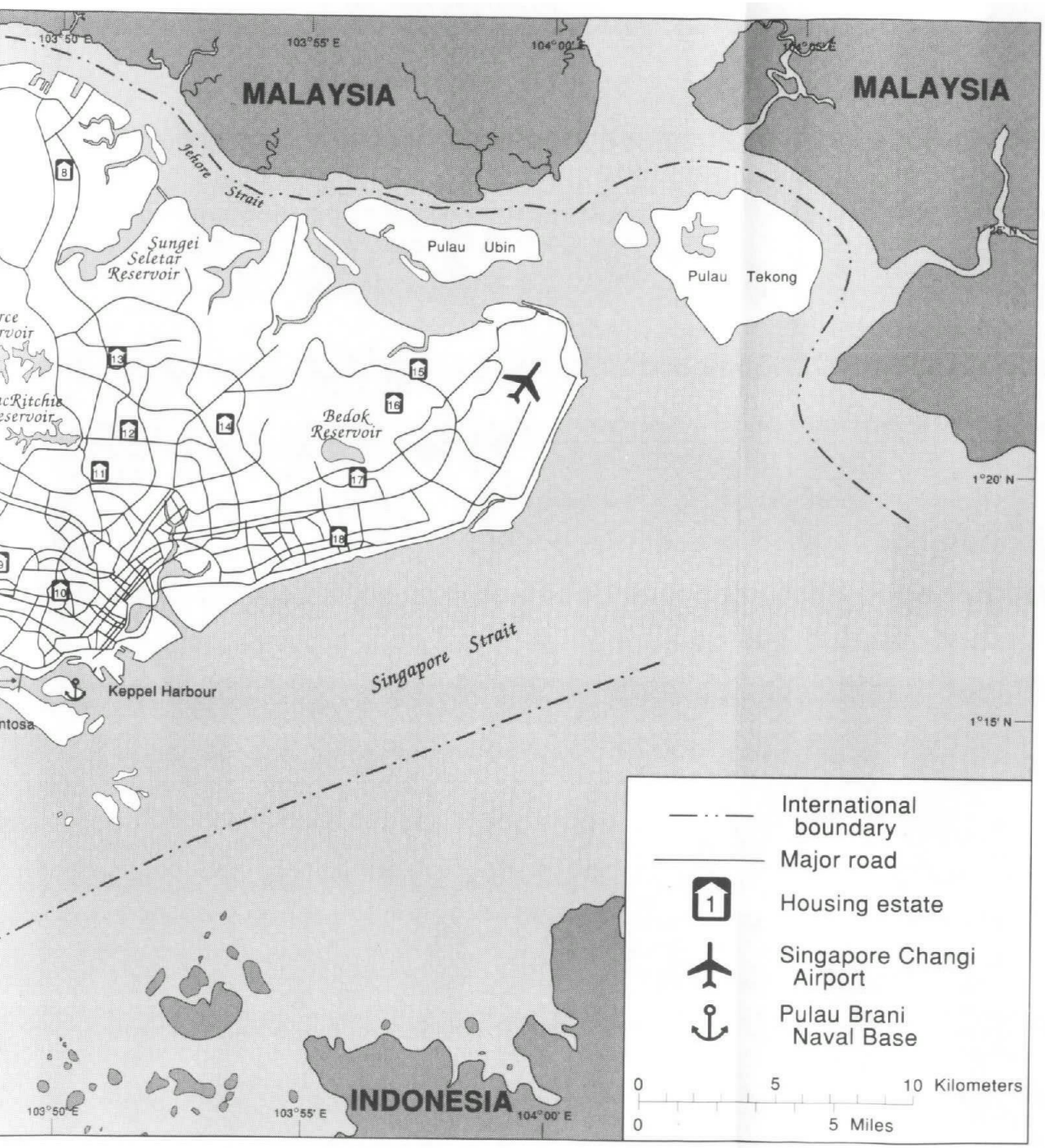


Figure 1. Singapore, 1989


MALAYSIA
MALAYSIA
Johore Strait
Pulau Ubin
Pulau Tekong
Sungei Seletar Reservoir
Bedok Reservoir
Singapore Strait
Keppel Harbour
INDONESIA
103°50' E
103°55' E
104°00' E
1°20' N
1°15' N
International boundary
Major road
Housing estate
Singapore Changi Airport
Pulau Brani Naval Base
0 5 10 Kilometers
0 5 Miles

Introduction

The world's busiest port, the modern nation of the Republic of Singapore, was founded as a British trading post on the Strait of Malacca in 1819. Singapore's location on the major sea route between India and China, its excellent harbor, and the free trade status conferred on it by its visionary founder, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, made the port an overnight success. By 1990 the multiethnic population attracted to the island had grown from a few thousand to 2.6 million Singaporeans, frequently referred to by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew as his nation's greatest resource. If Raffles had set the tone for the island's early success, Lee had safeguarded the founder's vision through the first quarter-century of Singapore's existence as an independent nation, providing the leadership that turned it into a global city that offered trading and financial services to the region and to the world.

Modern Singapore would be scarcely recognizable to Raffles, who established his trading center on an island covered with tropical forests and ringed with mangrove swamps. Towering skyscrapers replace the colonial town he designed, and modern expressways cover the tracks of bullock carts that once led from the harbor to the commercial district and the countryside beyond. Hills have been leveled, swamps filled, and the island itself expanded in size through extensive land reclamation projects (see fig. 1). Offshore islands are used for recreation parks, oil refineries, and military training bases. Despite the scarcity of land for real estate, the government has worked to maintain and expand the island's parks, gardens, and other green spaces. By housing 88 percent of its population in mostly multistoried public housing, Singapore has kept a rein on suburban sprawl. In Raffles's town plan, separate areas were set aside for the various ethnic groups of the time: Malays, Chinese, Arabs, Bugis, and Europeans. Government resettlement programs begun in the 1960s broke up the former ethnic enclaves by requiring that the public housing projects—called housing estates—that replaced them reflect the ethnic composition of the country as a whole. As a result, modern Singapore's three main ethnic groups—Chinese, Malays, and Indians—live next door to each other and share the same housing development facilities, shops, and transportation.

Despite efforts to maintain an ethnic balance in housing, however, the stated goal of the nation's leaders is not that Singapore become a mini-melting pot, but, rather, a multiethnic society.

Of the country's 2.6 million inhabitants, about 76 percent are Chinese, 15 percent Malay, 6.5 percent Indian, and 2.5 percent other. There are, however, mixtures within this mixture. The designation Chinese lumps together speakers of more than five mutually unintelligible dialects; Singaporean Malays trace their forebears to all of the major islands of the Indonesian archipelago, as well as to the Malay Peninsula; and the ancestral homes of Indians include what are the modern states of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Out of this diversity, the government leadership has attempted to establish what it calls "Singaporean identity," which would include certain unifying and modernizing elements but yet retain essential variations, based on Asian culture and values. One of the unifying factors is the English language, selected as the medium for educational instruction both because of its neutrality in the eyes of the three dominant ethnic groups and because of its position as the international language of business, science, and technology. In order not to lose touch with their Asian heritage, however, Singaporean school children are also required to study an appropriate "mother tongue," designated by the government as either Malay, Tamil, or Mandarin Chinese—a vast oversimplification of the polyglot of Singaporean native languages.

Singaporean identity, as envisioned by the country's leadership, calls for rugged individualism with an emphasis on excellence; the government constantly exhorts its citizens to be the best they can be. Education, home ownership, and upward mobility are all considered appropriate goals. Although Singaporeans are expected to be modern in their outlook, they also are encouraged to retain a core of traditional Asian values and culture. In a society in which all share a common education system, public housing, recreation facilities, and military training, the government considers it important to highlight the uniqueness of the three official ethnic groups—Chinese, Malays, and Indians—through the setting aside of national ethnic holidays and the sponsorship of ethnic festivals. Singaporean ethnic differences are usually maintained, however, not so much by these somewhat self-conscious displays of ethnicity but rather by membership in ethnically exclusive associations. Usually religious, charitable, or business in nature, many of these associations had their origins in colonial Singapore and represent finer distinctions of ethnicity than those supported by the government. Chinese trade associations, for example, are usually restricted to speakers of a particular dialect. Hindu temples are sometimes associated with worshipers who trace their heritage to a particular region of India.

Singapore is multireligious as well as multiethnic. Major religious preferences reported in 1988 were Buddhism (28 percent), Christian (19 percent), no religion (17 percent), Islam (16 percent), Daoist (13 percent), and Hindu (5 percent). Singapore's nineteenth-century immigrants valued the social as well as religious aspects of their congregations, and their descendants are more likely to concern themselves with social activities centered around their temples and mosques than with elaborate ritual or ceremony. The government, although secular, views religion as a positive force for instilling moral values in the society. At the same time, it keeps a watchful eye out for social or political activism within religious groups. Muslim fundamentalists and over-zealous Christian proselytizers alike are kept under careful scrutiny, lest they upset the religious and ethnic harmony of the country.

Singapore closely resembles developed countries in terms of its low birth rates, high life expectancy (73.8 years at birth), and major causes of death—heart disease, cancer, and stroke. Although in the early years of independence the government mounted campaigns to lower the country's high birth rate, it became concerned in the 1980s when the rate dropped below the replacement level. Campaigns and incentives were instituted to encourage those who could afford it to have more than two children. College-educated women were especially encouraged by exhortations and incentives to marry and have children.

In terms of public health, Singapore also closely resembles developed countries. Although some observers criticize the country's modern, sanitized environment and mourn the loss of the old port's charm, they probably either have forgotten or never knew the open sewers, tuberculosis sanatoriums, and opium dens of colonial Singapore. Whereas the manufacture and sale of opium continued to be a major source of revenue for the colonial government up until World War II, the government effectively combats drug use in modern Singapore through antidrug campaigns, rehabilitation centers, and a mandatory death penalty for trafficking. The government heavily subsidizes services in order to make them affordable to all and sets aside 6 percent of the monthly income of each worker into a personal Medisave account, which can be used to pay hospitalization costs for any family member. The Medisave account is part of the Central Provident Fund, which is Singapore's compulsory national social security savings plan. Contribution rates due to be phased in in the early 1990s mandate a contribution of 40 percent of the gross wages of employees under fifty-five, with employee and employer sharing the burden equally. Singaporeans can use these funds to invest in approved securities, to purchase

homes in government housing projects, or to pay for hospitalization and retirement. By 1990 some 88 percent of Singaporeans lived in Housing and Development Board apartments, a vast public housing and urban redevelopment project initiated in the early postwar years. Under the program, which began in earnest after independence, Singapore's slums and ethnic neighborhoods gradually were replaced with modern housing estates, self-contained units providing shopping, restaurants, and recreation facilities as well as apartments of various sizes, scattered outward from the old central city. A network of superhighways and a state-of-the-art mass rapid transit system connect Singapore's housing estates with commercial and industrial areas.

Although Singapore's founder and other nineteenth-century residents would no longer recognize the island, they would at least be able to identify with certain aspects of its modern economy. The principle of free trade laid down by Raffles was still largely in effect in the late 1980s, with only a few revenue tariffs levied on such things as tobacco and liquor. Trade continued to be the island's lifeblood; in 1988 the value of Singapore's international trade was triple the total of its gross domestic product (GDP). Although some aspects of the trade have changed, others remained the same. The island's initial success resulted from its role as a conveniently located and duty-free entrepôt for the three-way trade among China, India, and various parts of the Malay Archipelago. This trade was an ancient commerce, and trading posts probably had flourished intermittently at that favored location for two millenia. In early colonial times, silks from China, manufactures from Europe, incense from India, and spices from the Moluccas all were shipped on the various seasonal trade winds to Singapore, where they were bought, sold, traded, or stored for a future customer. By the late nineteenth century, however, the British overlords of Singapore had extended their influence or control throughout the Malay Peninsula, and the port acquired a large hinterland rich in resources. Singapore became the outlet for Malaya's tin and rubber, as well as the gateway through which were funneled supplies and workers for the peninsula's mines and plantations. Tin smelting and rubber processing were added to the list of services that Singapore provided—a long list that already included wholesaling, ship repair and provisioning, warehousing, and a host of banking and financial services.

In 1990 the economy of modern Singapore was still based on the same services that were performed by the colonial port, although most of these services had been greatly expanded or modified and new ones added. The major sectors of the economy were the regional

entrepôt trade, export-oriented manufacturing, petroleum refining and shipping, production of goods and services for the domestic economy, and a vastly expanded services industry.

When independence was suddenly thrust upon Singapore in 1965, its economic prospects looked bleak, if not precarious. In the aftermath of World War II, Singapore had faced staggering problems of high unemployment, slow economic growth, inadequate housing, decaying infrastructure, and labor and social unrest. Separation from Malaysia meant the loss of its economic hinterland, and Indonesia's policy of military Confrontation directed at Singapore and Malaysia had dried up the entrepôt trade from that direction. Moreover, with the announcement in 1968 of Britain's departure from the island's bases, Singapore faced the loss of 20 percent of its jobs. These problems led Singapore's leadership to take a strong role in guiding the nation's economy. The government aggressively promoted export-oriented, labor-intensive industrialization through a program of incentives designed to attract foreign investment. By 1972 one-quarter of Singapore's manufacturing firms were either foreign-owned or joint-venture companies, with the United States and Japan both major investors. The response of foreign investors to Singapore's favorable investment climate and the rapid expansion of the world economy at that time were factors in the annual double-digit growth of the country's GDP during most of the period from 1965 through 1973. By the late 1970s, however, government planners had adopted a policy of replacing Singapore's labor-intensive manufacturing with skill- and technology-intensive, high value-added industries. Information technology was particularly targeted for expansion, and by 1989 Singapore was the world's largest producer of disk drives and disk drive parts. In that year, earnings from manufacturing accounted for 30 percent of the country's GDP.

Although Singapore lost its former hinterland when it separated from Malaysia, its northern neighbor remained the leading source of primary imports and a major destination for Singapore's manufactured exports. Malaysia was Singapore's third largest overall trading partner in 1988, and Singaporean companies were major investors in Malaysia's southern state of Johor. The entrepôt trade with Indonesia had long since revived following the end of Confrontation in 1966. By the late 1980s, Singapore was the world's third largest petroleum-refining center as well as third largest oil-trading center, serving the needs of oil-rich Indonesia and Malaysia. By 1988 Singapore had nosed out Rotterdam as the world's busiest port in terms of tonnage. Some 700 shiplines used its modern facilities each year, including Singapore's own merchant fleet, which

ranked fifteenth worldwide. Four major shipyards employed about 70,000 workers, about 40 percent of whom were from neighboring Asian countries.

One of the fastest growing sectors of the economy was Singapore's international banking and financial services sector, which accounted for nearly 25 percent of the country's GDP in the late 1980s. Historically, Singapore served as the financial services center for Southeast Asia, and in the late 1980s it ranked with Hong Kong as the two most important Asian financial centers after Tokyo. The government provided incentives for the continuing diversification and automation of financial services, and Singapore's political stability and top-notch infrastructure were important attractions for international bankers and investors. Trade, manufacturing, and international financial services were closely linked in Singapore, which in 1990 hosted more than 650 multinational companies and several thousand international financial institutions and trading firms. Singapore's reliance on the international economy, over which it had little control, provided incentive for the government to play a strong role in regulating domestic conditions. Soon after independence, the government brought under control the serious labor unrest of the 1950s and early 1960s in order to present a more favorable climate for foreign investment. Discipline imposed on the labor force was counterbalanced, however, by provisions for workers' welfare. While the booming economy of the late 1960s and 1970s brought new jobs to the private sector, government provision of subsidized housing, education, health services, and public transportation created jobs in the public sector. The Central Provident Fund, built up by compulsory contributions by both employer and employee, provided the necessary capital for government projects as well as for the country's comprehensive social security scheme.

Singapore, Inc., as some observers refer to the country, spent the first twenty-five years of its independence under the same management. Led by Lee Kuan Yew, the country's first and only prime minister, the People's Action Party (PAP—see Glossary) won all or nearly all of the seats in parliament in the six elections held between 1959 and 1988. Based on a British parliamentary system, with free and open elections, the Singapore government was recognized for its stability, honesty, and effectiveness. Critics complained, however, that the government's authoritarian leadership reserved for itself all power of decision making and blocked the rise of an effective opposition. A small nucleus of leaders centered around Lee had indeed closely guided the country from its turbulent preindependence days and crafted the policies that led to Singapore's

economic development. During the 1980s, however, a second generation of leaders was carefully groomed to take over, and in early 1990, only Lee remained of the first generation leaders.

In late 1989, Lee announced that he would step down in late 1990 and that his successor, First Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, had already largely taken over the day-to-day management of the government. However, based on the prime minister's own assertions that he was not yet ready to relinquish all control, observers speculated on just what powers Lee would continue to hold. Goh acknowledged in late 1989 the growing sophistication and rising expectations of younger Singaporeans, who want a greater participation in the country's political life, and noted that he expected the opposition to claim a larger share of seats in parliament in the 1990s. In contrasting his leadership style with that of Lee, Goh stated that Lee "believes in firm government from the center . . . whereas our style is a little more consultative, more consensus-building." Behind Goh in the Singapore leadership queue was believed to be Lee Kuan Yew's son, Brigadier General Lee Hsien Loong, who served in the cabinet as minister for trade and industry and second minister for defence. His meteoric rise in the late 1980s through the ranks of bureaucratic and political responsibility was regarded with interest by both foreign and domestic observers.

The transition to a new generation of leaders was a phenomenon not unique to Singapore. In neighboring Malaysia and Indonesia, the independence generation was also rapidly dwindling, and the 1990s will surely mark the passing from the scene of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and President Soeharto as well as Lee Kuan Yew. The close relationship between Singapore and both its neighbors had been built to a large extent on personal ties between Lee and his counterparts in Malaysia and Indonesia. Nonetheless, the new leadership of these countries will very likely continue to build on the foundation laid by their predecessors.

In late 1989, Goh discussed the prospect of Johor State, the nearby Indonesian island of Batam (currently being developed), and Singapore forming a "triangle of growth" within the region in a cooperative rather than competitive effort. There were also signs of increased military cooperation among the three countries. Singapore, for example, conducted bilateral land exercises for the first time with both Malaysia and Indonesia in 1989. Bilateral air and naval exercises had been conducted with both countries during most of the 1980s. All three countries (along with Thailand, Brunei, and the Philippines) were members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN—see Glossary), formed in 1967 to promote closer political and economic cooperation within the

region. The invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam in 1978 brought increased unity to the organization throughout the 1980s, as it sought to find a peaceful solution to the Cambodian problem. Although there was considerable bilateral military cooperation among ASEAN states, the organization was not viewed by its members as a military alliance. However, Singapore and Malaysia, along with Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, were also members of the 1971 Five-Powers Defence Agreement, which provided for consultation and support by the latter three nations in the event of an attack on Singapore or Malaysia. Cooperation under the agreement diminished during the 1970s, but by the late 1980s extensive military exercises involving all five participants were again being held.

In August 1989, Lee Kuan Yew created a stir within the region by stating that Singapore was "prepared to host some United States facilities to make it easier for the Philippines to host the United States bases there." Malaysia reacted negatively to the announcement, and other ASEAN countries expressed some dismay. In October, however, the Singapore foreign ministry clarified the issue by stating that an increased use of Singapore's maintenance and repair facilities by United States ships had been agreed on by the two countries, as had short-term visits by United States aircraft to Singapore's Paya Lebar Air Base. The agreement followed a period of somewhat strained relations between the two nations, during which the United States had been critical of Singapore's use of its Internal Security Act to detain dissidents indefinitely, and Singapore had accused Washington of meddling in its internal affairs. The United States, however, was Singapore's largest trading partner and foreign investor, and the relationship was one that neither country was eager to upset.

By the last decade of the twentieth century, the former colonial port of Singapore had become a global financial, trading, and industrial center that continued to live by its wits in the world of international trade, just as it had done in the nineteenth century. Singapore's leadership and its people have always managed to adapt to the changing demands of the world economy, on which so much of their livelihood depended. In the coming decade, however, a new generation of leaders will take full control of the nation's government and economy. Before them lies the task of reconciling the need to steer a steady course in the nation's continuing development with the people's growing aspirations for an increased share in political and economic decision making.

March 17, 1990

As Singapore faced what its policy planners refer to as "the next lap," the future of the island nation appeared bright. The economic growth rate for 1990 topped 8 percent, led by a booming financial services sector and strong performances in industry and tourism. Not ones to rest on their accomplishments, Singapore's planners began unveiling strategies to internationalize the country's economy. Singaporean capital and management expertise increasingly was being invested abroad, not just in the growth triangle being formed among Singapore, Johor, and Indonesia's Riau Islands, but in Hong Kong, China (with which diplomatic relations were established in 1990), New Zealand, and other parts of the Asia-Pacific region.

In August 1990, Singapore celebrated twenty-five years of independence, and a few months later, on November 28, Goh Chok Tong was sworn in as the nation's second prime minister. As Lee Kuan Yew prepared to leave the office he had held for thirty-one years, former Foreign Minister Sinnathamby Rajaratnam remarked that there was no need to erect any monuments in honor of Lee because "Singapore is his monument." Lee, in any event, was expected to remain close at hand; he will continue to serve as a senior minister in the Singapore cabinet and as secretary general of the People's Action Party. Moreover, in January 1991, Parliament passed legislation converting the appointive ceremonial post of president to a directly elected office with wide executive powers that appeared to some observers to be designed specifically with Lee in mind. Prime Minister Goh, at his swearing in ceremony, summed up the task that lay before him: "My mission is clear: to ensure that Singapore thrives and grows after Lee Kuan Yew; to find a new group of men and women to help me carry on where he and his colleagues left off; and to build a nation of character and grace where people live lives of dignity, fulfillment and care for one another."

June 14, 1991 Barbara Leitch LePoer

Chapter 1. Historical Setting

Statue of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, founder of modern Singapore

FAVORABLY LOCATED AT the southern end of the Strait of Malacca, the shortest sea route between China and India, the island of Singapore was known to mariners as early as the third century A.D. By the seventh century, the Srivijaya Empire, the first in a succession of maritime states to arise in the region of the Malay Archipelago, linked numerous ports and cities along the coasts of Sumatra, Java, and the Malay Peninsula. Singapore probably was one of many outposts of Srivijaya, serving as an entrepôt and supply point for Chinese, Thai, Javanese, Malay, Indian, and Arab traders. An early chronicle refers to the island as Temasek and recounts the founding there, in 1299, of the city of Singapura ("lion city"). In the following three centuries, Singapura came under the sway of successive Southeast Asian powers, including the empires of Srivijaya, Majapahit, and Ayutthaya and the Malacca and Johore sultanates. In 1613 the Portuguese, the newest power in the region, burned down a trading post at the mouth of the Singapore River, and the curtain came down on the tiny island for two centuries.

In 1818 Singapore was settled by a Malay official of the Johore Sultanate and his followers, who shared the island with several hundred indigenous tribespeople and some Chinese planters. The following year, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, an official of the British East India Company, arrived in Singapore and secured permission from its Malay rulers to establish a trading post on the island. Named by Raffles for its ancient predecessor, Singapore quickly became a successful port open to free trade and free immigration. Before the trading post's founding, the Dutch had a monopoly on the lucrative three-way trade among China, India, and the East Indies. Now Indian, Arab, European, Chinese, Thai, Javanese, and Bugis traders alike stopped in their passage through the Strait of Malacca to anchor in the excellent harbor and exchange their wares. Malays, Chinese, Indians, Arabs, and Europeans flocked to the growing settlement to make their fortunes servicing the needs of the sea traders.

The next half century brought increased prosperity, along with the growing pains of a rapidly expanding seaport with a widely diverse population. During this period Singapore, Penang, and Malacca were ruled together as the Straits Settlements (see Glossary) from the British East India Company headquarters in India. In 1867, when Singapore was a bustling seaport of 85,000 people, the Straits Settlements was made a crown colony ruled directly

from London. Singapore continued to grow and prosper as a crown colony. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the advent of steamships, the expansion of colonialism in Southeast Asia, and the continuing spread of British influence in Malaya combined to establish Singapore's position as an important trade and manufacturing center in the late nineteenth century.

In the early twentieth century, financial institutions, transportation, communications, and government infrastructure expanded rapidly to support the booming trade and industry. Social and educational services lagged far behind, however, and a large gulf separated the upper classes from the lower classes, whose lives were characterized by poverty, overcrowding, malnutrition, disease, and opium addiction. Singapore was largely unaffected by World War I. Following the war, the colony experienced both boom and depression, but on the whole, expanded and prospered.

During the period between the world wars, Singapore's Chinese took increasing interest in events in China, and many supported either the Chinese Communist Party or the Guomindang (Kuomintang—Chinese Nationalist Party). The Malayan Communist Party (MCP—see Glossary) was organized in 1930 and competed with the local branch of the Guomindang. Beginning in the early 1930s, both groups strongly supported China against the rising tide of Japanese aggression. Japan's lightning attack on Malaya in December 1941 took the British by surprise, and by mid-February the Japanese were in control of both Malaya and Singapore. Renamed Shōnan ("Light of the South"), Singapore suffered greatly during the Japanese occupation.

Although Singaporeans tumultuously welcomed the return of the British in 1945, their view of the colonial relationship had changed forever. Strikes and student demonstrations organized by the MCP increased throughout the 1950s. The yearning for independence was beginning to be felt in Singapore and Malaya as it was all over the colonial world. In 1953 a British commission recommended partial internal self-government for Singapore, which had been governed as a separate crown colony following the formation of the Federation of Malaya in 1948. Political parties began to form. In 1954 a group of anticolonialists led by David Marshall formed the Labour Front, a political party that campaigned for immediate independence within a merged Singapore and Malaya. That same year saw the formation of the People's Action Party (PAP—see Glossary) under Lee Kuan Yew, which also campaigned for an end to colonialism and union with Malaya. The Labour Front formed a coalition government with David Marshall as chief minister following elections in 1955 for the newly established Legislative

Assembly. In 1956–58, Merdeka (freedom in Malay) talks were held in London to discuss the political future of Singapore. As a result of the discussions, Singapore was granted internal self-government, whereas defense and foreign affairs were left in the hands of the British.

In the May 1959 election, the PAP swept the polls, and Lee became prime minister. Singapore's foreign and local business communities were greatly alarmed by the turn of events, fearing that the communist wing of the PAP would soon seize control of the government. The PAP moderates under Lee, however, favored independence through merger with Malaya. Singaporean voters approved the PAP merger plan in September 1962, and on September 16, 1963, Singapore joined Malaya and the former British Borneo territories of Sabah and Sarawak to form an independent Malaysia. After two years of communal strife, pressure from neighboring Indonesia, and political wrangling between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, however, Singapore was forced to separate from Malaysia and became an independent nation on August 9, 1965.

Singaporeans and their leaders immediately accepted the challenge of forging a viable nation on a tiny island with few resources other than the determination and talent of its people. The leaders sought to establish a unique "Singaporean identity" and to strengthen economic and political ties with Malaysia, Indonesia, and the other countries of the region. The government also began to reorient the economy toward more high-technology industries that would enhance the skills of the labor force and attract increased foreign investment. By the 1970s, Singapore was among the world leaders in shipping, air transport, and oil refining. By the mid-1980s, the first generation of leaders under Lee Kuan Yew had successfully guided the nation for more than two decades, and a new generation was beginning to take charge.

Precolonial Era

Located astride the sea routes between China and India, from ancient times the Malay Archipelago served as an entrepôt, supply point, and rendezvous for the sea traders of the kingdoms and empires of the Asian mainland and the Indian subcontinent. The trade winds of the South China Sea brought Chinese junks laden with silks, damasks, porcelain, pottery, and iron to seaports that flourished on the Malay Peninsula and the islands of Sumatra and Java. There they met with Indian and Arab ships, brought by the monsoons of the Indian Ocean, carrying cotton textiles, Venetian glass, incense, and metalware. Fleets of swift *prahu* (interisland craft) supplied fish, fruit, and rice from Java and pepper and spices from

the Moluccas in the eastern part of the archipelago. All who came brought not only their trade goods but also their cultures, languages, religions, and technologies for exchange in the bazaars of this great crossroads.

In time, the ports of the peninsula and archipelago formed the nucleus of a succession of seabased kingdoms, empires, and sultanates. By the late seventh century, the great maritime Srivijaya Empire, with its capital at Palembang in eastern Sumatra, had extended its rule over much of the peninsula and archipelago. Historians believe that the island of Singapore was probably the site of a minor port of Srivijaya.

Temasek and Singapura

Although legendary accounts shroud Singapore's earliest history, chroniclers as far back as the second century alluded to towns or cities that may have been situated at that favored location. Some of the earliest records of this region are the reports of Chinese officials who served as envoys to the seaports and empires of the Nanyang (southern ocean—see Glossary), the Chinese term for Southeast Asia. The earliest first-hand account of Singapore appears in a geographical handbook written by the Chinese traveler Wang Dayuan in 1349. Wang noted that Singapore Island, which he called Tan-ma-hsi (Danmaxi), was a haven for several hundred boatloads of pirates who preyed on passing ships. He also described a settlement of Malay and Chinese living on a terraced hill known in Malay legend as Bukit Larangan (Forbidden Hill), the reported burial place of ancient kings. The fourteenth-century Javanese chronicle, the *Nagarakertagama,* also noted a settlement on Singapore Island, calling it Temasek.

A Malay seventeenth-century chronicle, the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals), recounts the founding of a great trading city on the island in 1299 by a ruler from Palembang, Sri Tri Buana, who named the city Singapura ("lion city") after sighting a strange beast that he took to be a lion. The prosperous Singapura, according to the *Sejarah Melayu,* in the mid-fourteenth century suffered raids by the expanding Javanese Majapahit Empire to the south and the emerging Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya to the north, both at various times claiming the island as a vassal state.

The *Sejarah Melayu,* as well as contemporaneous Portuguese accounts, note the arrival around 1388 of King Paramesvara from Palembang, who was fleeing Majapahit control. Although granted asylum by the ruler of Singapura, the king murdered his host and seized power. Within a few years, however, Majapahit or Thai forces again drove out Paramesvara, who fled northward to found

eventually the great seaport and kingdom of Malacca. In 1414 Paramesvara converted to Islam and established the Malacca Sultanate, which in time controlled most of the Malay Peninsula, eastern Sumatra, and the islands between, including Singapura. Fighting ships for the sultanate were supplied by a senior Malaccan official based at Singapura. The city of Malacca served not only as the major seaport of the region in the fifteenth century, but also as the focal point for the dissemination of Islam throughout insular Southeast Asia.

Johore Sultanate

When the Portuguese captured Malacca in 1511, the reigning Malaccan sultan fled to Johore in the southern part of the Malay Peninsula, where he established a new sultanate (see fig. 2). Singapura became part of the new Johore Sultanate and was the base for one of its senior officials in the latter sixteenth century. In 1613, however, the Portuguese reported burning down a trading outpost at the mouth of the Temasek (Singapore) River, and Singapura passed into history.

In the following two centuries, the island of Temasek was largely abandoned and forgotten as the fortunes of the Johore Sultanate rose and fell. By 1722 a vigorous seafaring people from the island of Celebes (modern Sulawesi, Indonesia) had become the power behind the throne of the Johore Sultanate. Under Bugis influence, the sultanate built up a lucrative entrepôt trade, centered at Riau, south of Singapore, in present-day Sumatra. Riau also was the site of major plantations of pepper and gambier, a medicinal plant used in tanning. The Bugis used waste material from the gambier refining process to fertilize pepper plants, a valuable crop, but one that quickly depletes soil nutrients. By 1784 an estimated 10,000 Chinese laborers had been brought from southern China to work the gambier plantations on Bintan Island in the Riau Archipelago (now part of Indonesia). In the early nineteenth century, gambier was in great demand in Java, Siam, and elsewhere, and cultivation of the crop had spread from Riau to the island of Singapore.

The territory controlled by the Johore Sultanate in the late eighteenth century was somewhat reduced from that under its precursor, the Malacca Sultanate, but still included the southern part of the Malay Peninsula, the adjacent area of Sumatra, and the islands between, including Singapore. The sultanate had become increasingly weakened by division into a Malay faction, which controlled the peninsula and Singapore, and a Bugis faction, which controlled the Riau Archipelago and Sumatra. When the ruling sultan died without a royal heir, the Bugis had proclaimed as

Source: Based on information from Constance M. Turnbull, *A Short History of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei,* Stanmore, N.S.W., 1980, 61; and Tan Ding Eing, *Portrait of Malaysia and Singapore,* Singapore, 1975, 22.

Figure 2. The Johore Sultanate, ca. 1700

sultan the younger of his two sons by a commoner wife. The sultan's elder son, Hussein (or Tengku Long) resigned himself to living in obscurity in Riau.

Although the sultan was the nominal ruler of his domain, senior officials actually governed the sultanate. In control of Singapore and the neighboring islands was Temenggong Abdu'r Rahman, Hussein's father-in-law. In 1818 the *temenggong* (a high Malay official) and some of his followers left Riau for Singapore shortly after

the Dutch signed a treaty with the Bugis-controlled sultan, allowing them to station a garrison at Riau. The *temenggong's* settlement on the Singapore River included several hundred *orang laut* (sea gypsies in Malay) under Malay overlords who owed allegiance to the *temenggong*. For their livelihood the inhabitants depended on fishing, fruit growing, trading, and occasional piracy. Large pirate fleets also used the strait between Singapore and the Riau Archipelago as a favorite rendezvous. Also living on the island in settlements along the rivers and creeks were several hundred indigenous tribespeople, who lived by fishing and gathering jungle produce. Some thirty Chinese, probably brought from Riau by the *temenggong,* had begun gambier and pepper production on the island. In all, perhaps a thousand people inhabited the island of Singapore at the dawn of the colonial era.

Founding and Early Years, 1819–26

By the early seventeenth century, both the Dutch and the English were sending regular expeditions to the East Indies. The English soon gave up the trade, however, and concentrated their efforts on India. In 1641 the Dutch captured Malacca and soon after replaced the Portuguese as the preeminent European power in the Malay Archipelago. From their capital at Batavia on Java, they sought to monopolize the spice trade. Their short-sighted policies and harsh treatment of offenders, however, impoverished their suppliers and encouraged smuggling and piracy by the Bugis and other peoples. By 1795, the Dutch enterprise in Asia was losing money, and in Europe the Netherlands was at war with France. The Dutch king fled to Britain where, in desperation, he issued the Kew Letters, by which all Dutch overseas territories were temporarily placed under British authority in order to keep them from falling to the French.

Anglo-Dutch Competition

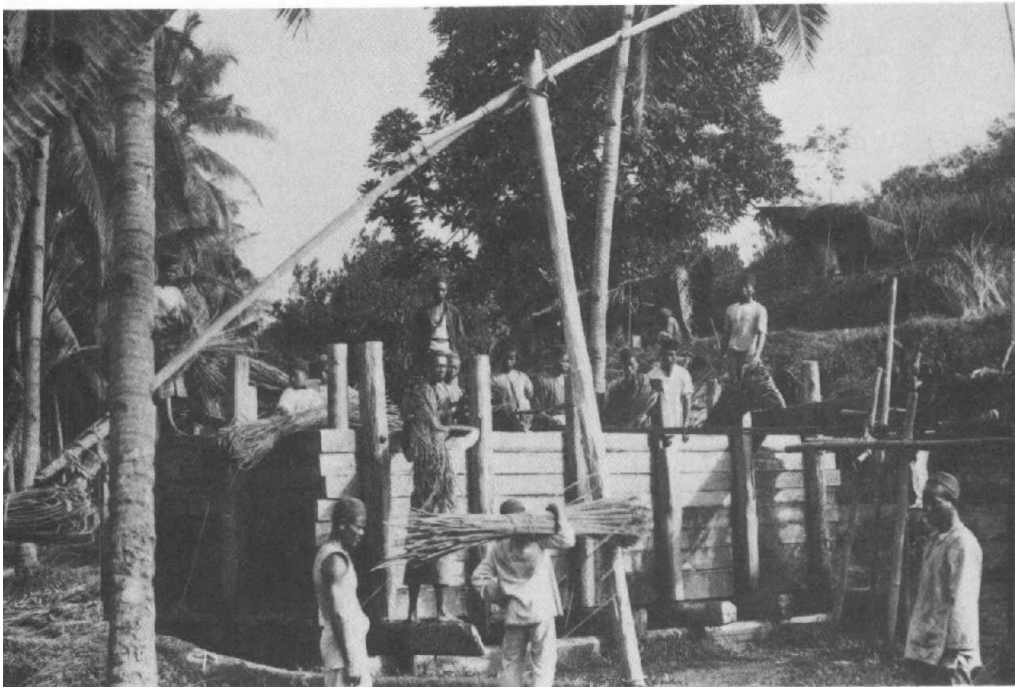
In the late eighteenth century, the British began to expand their commerce with China from their bases in India through both private traders and the British East India Company. The company had occupied a small settlement at Bencoolen (Bengkulu) on the western coast of Sumatra since 1684; from there it had engaged in the pepper trade after being forced out of Java by the Dutch. Acutely aware of the need for a base somewhere midway between Calcutta and Guangzhou (Canton), the company leased the island of Penang, on the western coast of the Malay Peninsula, from the sultan of Kedah in 1791. From these posts at Penang and Bencoolen, the British began in 1795 to occupy the Dutch possessions

placed temporarily in their care by the Kew Letters, including Malacca and Java. After war in Europe ended in 1814, however, the British agreed to return Java and Malacca to the Dutch. By 1818 the Dutch had returned to the East Indies and had reimposed their restrictive trade policies. In that same year, the Dutch negotiated a treaty with the Bugis-controlled sultan of Johore granting them permission to station a garrison at Riau, thereby giving them control over the main passage through the Strait of Malacca. British trading ships were heavily taxed at Dutch ports and suffered harassment by the Dutch navy. Meanwhile, the British government and the British East India Company officials in London, who were concerned with maintaining peace with the Dutch, consolidating British control in India, and reducing their commitments in the East Indies, considered relinquishing Bencoolen and perhaps Penang to the Dutch in exchange for Dutch territories in India.

Raffles' Dream

Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, the lieutenant governor of Bencoolen in 1818, vigorously opposed his government's plan to abandon control of the China trade to the Dutch. Raffles, who had started his career as a clerk for the British East India Company in London, was promoted at the age of twenty-three to assistant secretary of the newly formed government in Penang in 1805. A serious student of the history and culture of the region and fluent in Malay, Raffles served as governor general of Java (1811–16). In 1818 Raffles sailed from Bencoolen to India, where he convinced Governor General Lord Hastings of the need for a British post on the southern end of the Strait of Malacca. Lord Hastings authorized Raffles to secure such a post for the British East India Company, provided that it did not antagonize the Dutch. Arriving in Penang, Raffles found Governor General James Bannerman unwilling to cooperate. When he learned that the Dutch had occupied Riau and were claiming that all territories of the sultan of Johore were within their sphere of influence, Raffles dispatched Colonel William Farquhar, an old friend and Malayan expert, to survey the Carimon Islands (modern Karimun Islands near Riau). Disregarding Bannerman's orders to him to await further instructions from Calcutta, Raffles slipped out of Penang the following night aboard a private trading ship and caught up with Farquhar. Raffles knew of Singapore Island from his study of Malay texts and determined to go there.

On January 28, 1819, Raffles and Farquhar anchored near the mouth of the Singapore River. The following day the two men went ashore to meet Temenggong Abdu'r Rahman, who granted



Singapore Malay fishing village, nineteenth century
Courtesy Library of Congress
Rattan harvesting in nineteenth-century Singapore
Courtesy Library of Congress

provisional permission for the British East India Company to establish a trading post on the island, subject to the approval of Hussein. Raffles, noting the protected harbor, the abundance of drinking water, and the absence of the Dutch, began immediately to unload troops, clear the land on the northeast side of the river, set up tents, and hoist the British flag. Meanwhile, the *temenggong* sent to Riau for Hussein, who arrived within a few days. Acknowledging Hussein as the rightful sultan of Johore, on February 6 Raffles signed a treaty with him and the *temenggong* confirming the right of the British East India Company to establish a trading post in return for an annual payment (in Spanish dollars, the common currency of the region at the time) of Sp$5,000 to Hussein and Sp$3,000 to the *temenggong*. Raffles then departed for Bencoolen, leaving Farquhar in charge, with instructions to clear the land, construct a simple fortification, and inform all passing ships that there were no duties on trade at the new settlement.

The immediate reaction to Raffles' new venture was mixed. Officials of the British East India Company in London feared that their negotiations with the Dutch would be upset by Raffles' action. The Dutch were furious because they considered Singapore within their sphere of influence. Although they could easily have overcome Farquhar's tiny force, the Dutch did not attack the small settlement because the angry Bannerman assured them that the British officials in Calcutta would disavow the whole scheme. In Calcutta, meanwhile, both the commercial community and the *Calcutta Journal* welcomed the news and urged full government support for the undertaking. Lord Hastings ordered the unhappy Bannerman to provide Farquhar with troops and money. Britain's foreign minister Lord Castlereagh, reluctant to relinquish to the Dutch "all the military and naval keys of the Strait of Malacca," had the question of Singapore added to the list of topics to be negotiated with the Dutch, thus buying time for the new settlement.

The opportunity to sell supplies at high prices to the new settlement quickly attracted many Malacca traders to the island. Word of Singapore's free trade policy also spread southeastward through the archipelago, and within six weeks more than 100 Indonesian interisland craft were anchored in the harbor, as well as one Siamese and two European ships. Raffles returned in late May to find that the population of the settlement had grown to nearly 5,000, including Malays, Chinese, Bugis, Arabs, Indians, and Europeans. During his four-week stay, he drew up a plan for the town and signed another agreement with Hussein and the *temenggong* establishing the boundaries of the settlement. He wrote to a friend that Singapore "is by far the most important station in the East; and,

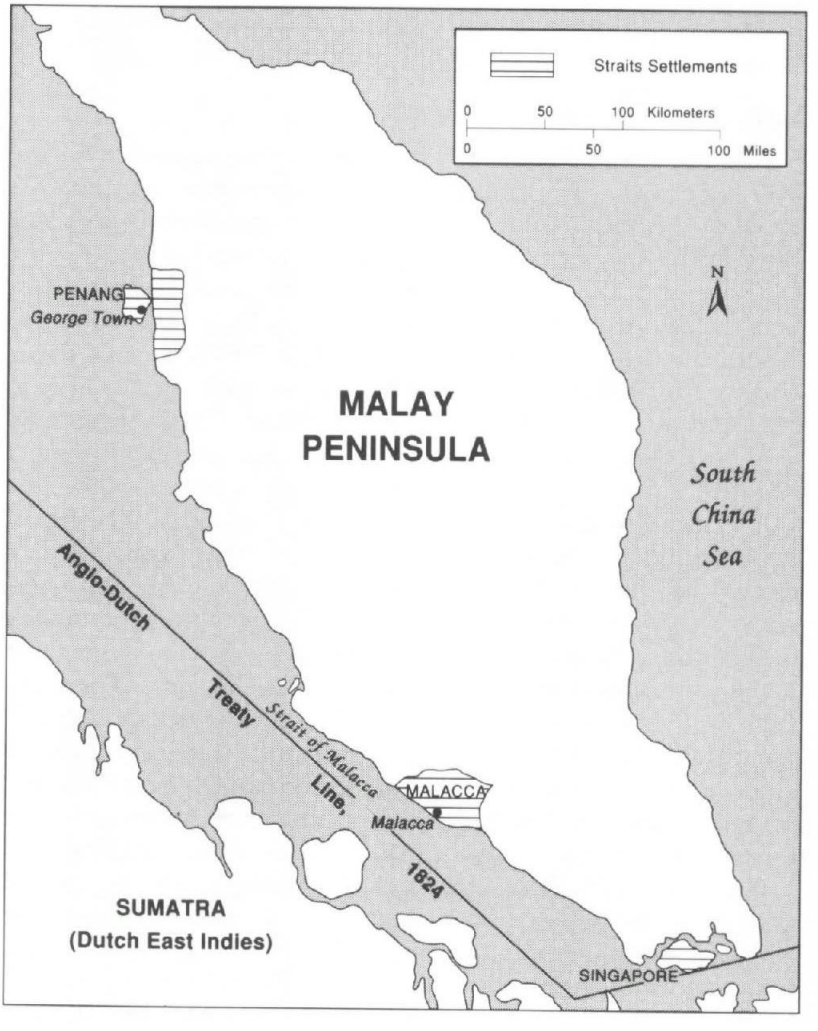
as far as naval superiority and commercial interests are concerned, of much higher value than whole continents of territory."

Early Administration and Growth

Although the India-China trade was partly responsible for the overnight success of Singapore, even more important was the well-established entrepôt trade of the East Indies that the new port captured from Riau and other trade centers. The news of the free port brought not only traders and merchants but also permanent settlers. Malays came from Penang, Malacca, Riau, and Sumatra. Several hundred boatloads of Hussein's followers came from Riau, and the new sultan had built for himself an *istana* (palace in Malay), thus making Singapore his headquarters. The growing power of the Dutch in Riau also spurred several hundred Bugis traders and their families to migrate to the new settlement. Singapore was also a magnet for the Nanyang Chinese who had lived in the region for generations as merchants, miners, or gambier farmers. They came from Penang, Malacca, Riau, Manila, Bangkok, and Batavia to escape the tariffs and restrictions of those places and to seek their fortunes. Many intermarried with Malay women, giving rise to the group known as the Baba Chinese (see Glossary). The small Indian population included both soldiers and merchants. A few Armenian merchants from Brunei and Manila were also attracted to the settlement, as were some leading Arab families from Sumatra. Most Europeans in the early days of Singapore were officials of the British East India Company or retired merchant sea captains.

Not wanting the British East India Company to view Singapore as an economic liability, Raffles left Farquhar a shoestring budget with which to administer the new settlement. Prevented from either imposing trade tariffs or selling land titles to raise revenue, Farquhar legalized gambling and the sale of opium and *arak,* an alcoholic drink. The government auctioned off monopoly rights to sell opium and spirits and to run gambling dens under a system known as tax farming, and the revenue thus raised was used for public works projects. Maintenance of law and order in the wide-open seaport was among the most serious problems Farquhar faced. There was constant friction among the various immigrant groups, particularly between the more settled Malays and Chinese from Malacca and the rough and ready followers of the *temenggong* and the sultan. The settlement's merchants eventually funded night watchmen to augment the tiny police force.

When Raffles returned to Singapore from Bencoolen in October 1822, he immediately began drawing up plans for a new town (see fig. 3). An area along the coast about five kilometers long and one



Source: Based on information from Gerald Percy Dartford, *A Short History of Malaya,* London, 1957, 102; and Constance M. Turnbull, *The Straits Settlements, 1826-67,* London, 1972.

Figure 3. The Straits Settlements, 1826

kilometer deep was designated the government and commercial quarter. A hill was leveled and the dirt used to fill a nearby swamp in order to provide a place for the heart of the commercial area, now Raffles Place. An orderly and scientifically laid out town was the goal of Raffles, who believed that Singapore would one day be "a place of considerable magnitude and importance." Under Raffles' plan, commercial buildings were to be constructed of brick

with tiled roofs, each with a two-meter covered walkway to provide shelter from sun and rain. Spaces were set aside for shipyards, markets, churches, theaters, police stations, and a botanical garden. Raffles had a wooden bungalow built for himself on Government Hill.

Each immigrant group was assigned an area of the settlement under the new plan. The Chinese, who were the fastest growing group, were given the whole area west of the Singapore River adjoining the commercial district; Chinatown was further divided among the various dialect groups. The *temenggong* and his followers were moved several kilometers west of the commercial district, mainly in an effort to curtail their influence in that area. The headmen or *kapitans* of the various groups were allotted larger plots, and affluent Asians and Europeans were encouraged to live together in a residential area adjacent to the government quarter.

In the absence of any legal code, Raffles in early 1823 promulgated a series of administrative regulations. The first required that land be conveyed on permanent lease at a public auction and that it must be registered. The second reiterated Singapore's status as a free port, a popular point with the merchants. In his farewell remarks, Raffles assured them that "Singapore will long and always remain a free port and no taxes on trade or industry will be established to check its future rise and prosperity." The third regulation made English common law the standard, although Muslim law was to be used in matters of religion, marriage, and inheritance involving Malays.

Raffles was an enlightened administrator for his time. He believed in the prevention of crime and the reform, rather than the mere punishment, of criminals. Payment of compensation to the injured by the offender was to be considered as important as punishment. Only murder was to be considered a capital offense, and various work and training programs were used to turn prisoners into useful settlers. Raffles shut down all gambling dens and heavily taxed the sale of liquor and opium. He abolished outright slavery in 1823, but was unable to eradicate debt bondage, by which immigrants often were forced to work years at hard labor to pay for their passage.

Raffles felt that under Farquhar the *temenggong* and the sultan had wielded too much power, receiving one-third of the proceeds from the opium, liquor, and gambling revenues, and demanding presents from the captains of the Asian ships that dropped anchor there. Hussein and the *temenggong,* however, viewed Singapore as a thriving entrepôt in the mold of the great port cities of the Malay maritime empires of Srivijaya, Malacca, and Johore. As rulers

of the island, they considered themselves entitled to a share of the power and proceeds of the settlement. In June 1823, Raffles managed to persuade Hussein and the *temenggong* to give up their rights to port duties and their share in the other tax revenues in exchange for a pension of Sp$1,500 and Sp$800 per month, respectively. Because the Dutch still contested the British presence in Singapore, Raffles did not dare push the issue further. On March 17, 1824, however, the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of London was signed, dividing the East Indies into two spheres of influence. The British would have hegemony north of a line drawn through the Strait of Malacca, and the Dutch would control the area south of the line. As a result, the Dutch recognized the British claim to Singapore and relinquished power over Malacca in exchange for the British post at Bencoolen. On August 3, with their claim to Singapore secure, the British negotiated a new treaty with the sultan and the *temenggong,* by which the Malay rulers were forced to cede Singapore and the neighboring islands to the British East India Company for cash payments and increased pensions. Under the treaty, the Malay chiefs also agreed to help suppress piracy, but the problem was not to be solved for several more decades.

In October 1823, Raffles left Singapore for Britain, never to return. Before leaving, he replaced Farquhar with the Scotsman John Crawfurd, an efficient and frugal administrator who guided the settlement through three years of vigorous growth. Crawfurd continued Raffles' struggles against slavery and piracy, but he permitted the gambling houses to reopen, taxed them, and used the revenue for street widening, bridge building, and other civic projects. He failed to support, however, Raffles' dream of higher education for the settlement. As his last public act, Raffles had contributed Sp$2,000 toward the establishment of a Singapore Institution, which he had envisioned as a training ground for Asian teachers and civil servants and a place where European officials could gain an appreciation of the rich cultural heritage of the region as Raffles himself had. He had hoped that the institution would attract the sons of rulers and chiefs of all the region. Crawfurd, however, advised the company officials in Calcutta that it would be preferable to support primary education. In fact, education at all levels was neglected until much later.

A Flourishing Free Port, 1826–67

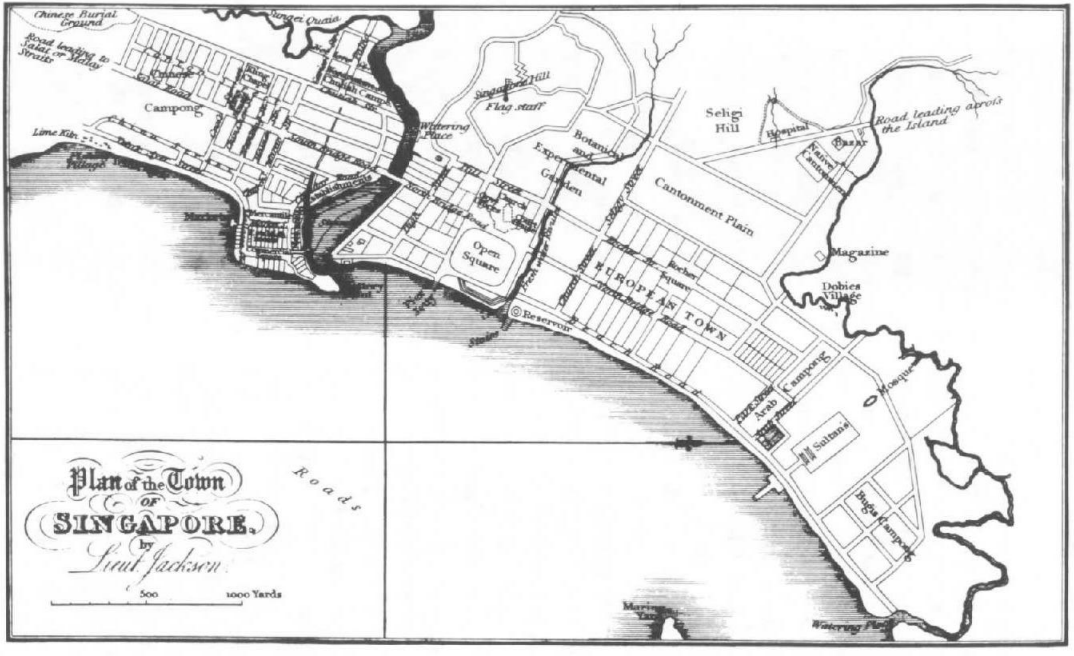
In the first half-century after its founding, Singapore grew from a precarious trading post of the British East India Company populated by a few thousand to a bustling, cosmopolitan seaport of 85,000 (see fig. 4). Although the general trend of Singapore's

economic status was upward during this period, the settlement endured economic recessions as well as prosperity, fires and floods as well as building booms, and bureaucratic incompetence as well as able administration. In 1826 the British East India Company combined Singapore with Penang and Malacca to form the Presidency of the Straits Settlements, with its capital at Penang. The new bureaucratic apparatus proved to be expensive and cumbersome, however, and in 1830 the Straits Settlements were reduced to a residency, or subdivision, of the Presidency of Bengal. Although Singapore soon overshadowed the other settlements, Penang remained the capital until 1832 and the judicial headquarters until 1856. The overworked civil service that administered Singapore remained about the same size between 1830 and 1867, although the population quadrupled during that period. Saddled with the endless narrative and statistical reports required by Bengal, few civil servants had time to learn the languages or customs of the people they governed.

Although the European and Asian commercial community was reasonably satisfied with the administration of the settlement under Bengal, an economic depression in the 1840s caused some to consider the merits of Singapore being administered directly as a crown colony. The advent of the steamship had made Singapore less dependent on Calcutta and more closely tied to the London commercial and political scene. By mid-century, the parent firms of most of Singapore's British-owned merchant houses were located in London rather than Calcutta. In 1851, following a visit to Singapore, Lord Dalhousie, the governor general of India, separated the Straits Settlements from Bengal and placed them directly under his own charge. In the following sixteen years, a number of issues arose that caused increased agitation to remove the Straits Settlements completely from India's administration and place it directly under the British Colonial Office. Among these issues were the need for protection against piracy and Calcutta's continuing attempts to levy port duties on Singapore. Mostly as a result of the need for a place other than fever-ridden Hong Kong to station British troops in Asia, London designated the Straits Settlements a crown colony on April 1, 1867.

Financial Success

Trade at Singapore had eclipsed that of Penang by 1824, when it reached a total of Sp$11 million annually. By 1869 annual trade at Singapore had risen to Sp$89 million. The cornerstone of the settlement's commercial success was the entrepôt trade, which was carried on with no taxation and a minimum of restriction. The



Source: Based on information from J. Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China*, London, 1828, 2, 383.

Figure 4. Plan of the Town of Singapore by Lieutenant Phillip Jackson, 1828.

main trading season began each year with the arrival of ships from China, Siam, and Cochinchina (as the southern part of Vietnam was then known). Driven by the northeast monsoon winds and arriving in January, February, and March, the ships brought immigrant laborers and cargoes of dried and salted foods, medicines, silk, tea, porcelain, and pottery. They left beginning in May with the onset of the southwest monsoons, laden with produce, spices, tin, and gold from the Malay Archipelago, opium from India, and English cotton goods and arms. The second major trading season began in September or October with the arrival of the Bugis traders in their small, swift *prahu,* bringing rice, pepper, spices, edible bird nests and shark fins, mother-of-pearl, gold dust, rattan, and camphor from the archipelago. They departed carrying British manufactures, cotton goods, iron, arms, opium, salt, silk, and porcelain. By mid-century, there were more than twenty British merchant houses in Singapore, as well as German, Swiss, Dutch, Portuguese, and French firms. The merchants would receive cargoes of European or Indian goods on consignment and sell them on commission.

Most of the trade between the European and Asian merchants was handled by Chinese middlemen, who spoke the necessary languages and knew the needs of their customers. Many of the middlemen had trained as clerks in the European trading firms of Malacca. With their experience, contacts, business acumen, and willingness to take risks, the middlemen were indispensable to the merchants. For the Chinese middlemen, the opportunities for substantial profit were great; but so were the risks. Lacking capital, the middlemen bought large quantities of European goods on credit with the hope of reselling them to the Chinese or Bugis ship captains or themselves arranging to ship them to the markets of Siam or the eastern Malay Peninsula. If, however, buyers could not be found or ships were lost at sea, the middlemen faced bankruptcy or prison. Although the merchants also stood to lose under such circumstances, the advantages of the system and the profits to be made kept it flourishing.

The main site for mercantile activity in mid-century Singapore was Commercial Square, renamed Raffles Place in 1858. Besides the European merchant houses located on the square, there were in 1846 six Jewish merchant houses, five Chinese, five Arab, two Armenian, one American, and one Indian. Each merchant house had its own pier for loading and unloading cargo; and ship chandlers, banks, auction houses, and other businesses serving the shipping trade also were located on the square. In the early years, merchants lived above their offices; but by mid-century most had

established themselves in beautiful houses and compounds in a fashionable section on the east bank of the Singapore River.

Construction of government buildings lagged far behind commercial buildings in the early years because of the lack of tax-generated revenue. The merchants resisted any attempts by Calcutta to levy duties on trade, and the British East India Company had little interest in increasing the colony's budget. After 1833, however, many public works projects were constructed by the extensive use of Indian convict labor. Irish architect George Drumgold Coleman, who was appointed superintendent of public works in that year, used convicts to drain marshes, reclaim seafront, lay out roads, and build government buildings, churches, and homes in a graceful colonial style.

Probably the most serious problem facing Singapore at mid-century was piracy, which was being engaged in by a number of groups who found easy pickings in the waters around the thriving port. Some of the followers of the *temenggong's* son and heir, Ibrahim, were still engaging in their "patrolling" activities in the late 1830s. Most dangerous of the various pirate groups, however, were the Illanun (Lanun) of Mindanao in the Philippines and northern Borneo. These fierce sea raiders sent out annual fleets of 50 to 100 well-armed *prahu,* which raided settlements, attacked ships, and carried off prisoners who were pressed into service as oarsmen. The Illanun attacked not only small craft from the archipelago but also Chinese and European sailing ships. Bugis trading captains threatened to quit trading at Singapore unless the piracy was stopped. In the 1850s, Chinese pirates, who boldly used Singapore as a place to buy arms and sell their booty, brought the trade between Singapore and Cochinchina to a standstill. The few patrol boats assigned by the British East India Company to protect the Straits Settlements were totally inadequate, and the Singapore merchants continually petitioned Calcutta and London for aid in stamping out the menace.

By the late 1860s, a number of factors had finally led to the demise of piracy. In 1841, the governor of the Straits Settlements, George Bonham, recognized Ibrahim as *temenggong* of Johore, with the understanding that he would help suppress piracy. By 1850 the Royal Navy was patrolling the area with steam-powered ships, which could navigate upwind and outmaneuver the pirate sailing ships. The expansion of European power in Asia also brought increased patrolling of the region by the Dutch in Sumatra, the Spanish in the Philippines, and the British from their newly established protectorates on the Malay Peninsula. China also agreed to cooperate in suppressing piracy under the provisions of treaties signed with the Western powers in 1860.

Singapore's development and prosperity at mid-century were largely confined to the coast within a few kilometers of the port area. The interior remained a dense jungle ringed by a coastline of mangrove swamps. Attempts to turn the island to plantation agriculture between 1830 and 1840 had met with little success. Nutmeg, coffee, sugar, cotton, cinnamon, cloves, and indigo all fell victim to pests, plant diseases, or insufficient soil fertility. The only successful agricultural enterprises were the gambier and pepper plantations, numbering about 600 in the late 1840s and employing some 6,000 Chinese laborers. When the firewood needed to extract the gambier became depleted, the plantation would be moved to a new area. As a result, the forests of much of the interior of the island had been destroyed and replaced by coarse grasses by the 1860s, and the gambier planters had moved their operations north to Johore. This pressure on the land also affected the habitats of the wildlife, particularly tigers, which began increasingly to attack villagers and plantation workers. Tigers reportedly claimed an average of one victim per day in the late 1840s. When the government offered rewards for killing the animals, tiger hunting became a serious business and a favorite sport. The last year a person was reported killed by a tiger was 1890, and the last wild tiger was shot in 1904.

A Cosmopolitan Community

As Singapore prospered and grew, the size and diversity of its population kept pace. By 1827, the Chinese had become the most numerous of Singapore's various ethnic groups. Many of the Chinese came from Malacca, Penang, Riau, and other parts of the Malay Archipelago to which their forebears had migrated decades or even generations before. More recent Chinese immigrants were mainly from the southeastern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian and spoke either the Hokkien, Teochiu, Cantonese, or Hakka dialects. In an extension of the common Chinese practice of sojourning, in which men temporarily left their home communities to seek work in nearby or distant cities, most migrants to Singapore saw themselves as temporary residents intending to return to home and family after making a fortune or at least amassing enough capital to buy land in their home district. Many did return; more did not. Even those who never returned usually sent remittances to families back home.

To help them face the dangers, hardships, and loneliness of the sojourner life, most men joined or were forced to join secret societies organized by earlier immigrants from their home districts. The secret societies had their origin in southern China, where, in the

late seventeenth century, the Heaven, Earth, and Man (or Triad) Society was formed to oppose the Qing (1644-1911) dynasty. By the nineteenth century, secret societies in China acted as groups that organized urban unskilled labor and used coercion to win control of economic niches, such as unloading ships, transporting cotton, or gambling and prostitution. The same pattern extended all over Southeast Asia, where immigrants joined secret societies whose membership was restricted to those coming from the same area and speaking the same dialect. Membership gave the immigrants some security, in the form of guaranteed employment and assistance in case of illness, but required loyalty to the leaders and payment of a portion of an already meager wage. Although the societies performed many useful social functions, they were also a major source of crime and violence. By 1860 there were at least twelve secret societies in Singapore, representing the various dialect and subdialect groups. Invariably friction arose as each society sought to control a certain area or the right to a certain tax farm. Civil war in China in the 1850s brought a flood of new migrants from China, including many rebels and other violent elements. Serious fighting between the various secret societies broke out in 1854, but it remained a domestic dispute within the Chinese community. Although not directed at the government or the non-Chinese communities, such outbreaks disrupted commerce and created a tense atmosphere, which led to the banning of secret societies in 1889.

Just as the European merchant community used Chinese middlemen in conducting their business, the Straits government relied on prominent Chinese businessmen to act as go-betweens with the Chinese community. In the early years, the Baba Chinese, who usually spoke English, served in this capacity. By mid-century, however, immigrant Chinese from the various dialect groups had begun to act as intermediaries. Some, such as Seah Eu Chin, who was the go-between with the Teochiu community, were well educated and from respected families. Seah, who made his fortune in gambier and pepper plantations, was an early member of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce, established in 1837, and a justice of the peace. Probably the wealthiest and most prominent Chinese immigrant in the nineteenth century was Hoo Ah Kay, nicknamed "Whampoa" after his birthplace near Guangzhou, who served as a go-between with the Cantonese-speaking community. Hoo came as a penniless youth and made his fortune in provisioning ships, merchandising, and speculating in land. He later became the first Asian member of Singapore's Legislative Council and a member of the Executive Council. Despite their close connections to the European ruling class, Seah, Hoo, and other prominent Chinese

carefully retained their Chinese culture and values, as did the less prominent immigrants.

Most Chinese immigrants fared far less well. If they survived the rigors of the voyage, they were forced to work at hard labor for a year or more to pay off their passage. Some were sent directly to the gambier plantations or even to the tin mines of the Malay Peninsula. Others were sent to toil on the docks or become construction workers. After paying off their passage, they began earning a meager wage, which, unless diverted for opium or gambling debts, was sent as a remittance to families back in China. Wives were in short supply, since very few Chinese women came to Singapore in the first few decades of the settlement. Even by the mid-1860s, the ratio of Chinese men to women was fifteen to one.

Until about 1860, Malays were the second largest group. The followers of the *temenggong* mostly moved to Johore, where many of them died of smallpox. The *orang laut* by mid-century merged with other groups of Malay, who were drawn from Riau, Sumatra, and Malacca. Generally peaceful and industrious, the Malays usually worked as fishermen, boatmen, woodcutters, or carpenters.

Most of the Bugis sea traders migrated to Macassar after the Dutch made it a free port in 1847, and by 1860 the Bugis population of Singapore had declined to less than 1,000. Small numbers of Arabs, Jews, and Armenians, many of them already well-to-do, were drawn to Singapore, where they amassed even greater wealth. Another small group numbered among Singapore's upper class were the Parsis, Indians of Iranian descent who were adherents of Zoroastrianism.

Indians had become Singapore's second largest community by 1860, numbering more than 11,000. Some of these people were laborers or traders, who, like the Chinese, came with the hope of making their fortune and returning to their homeland. Some were troops garrisoned at Singapore by the government in Calcutta. Another group were convicts who were first brought to Singapore from the detention center in Bencoolen in 1825, after Bencoolen was handed over to the Dutch. Singapore then became a major detention center for Indian prisoners. Rehabilitation rather than punishment was emphasized, and prisoners were trained in such skills as brick making, carpentry, rope making, printing, weaving, and tailoring, which later would enable them to find employment. Singapore's penal system was considered so enlightened that Dutch, Siamese, and Japanese prison administrators came to observe it. Convict labor was used to build roads, clear the jungle, hunt tigers, and construct public buildings, some of which were still in use in the late twentieth century. After completing their

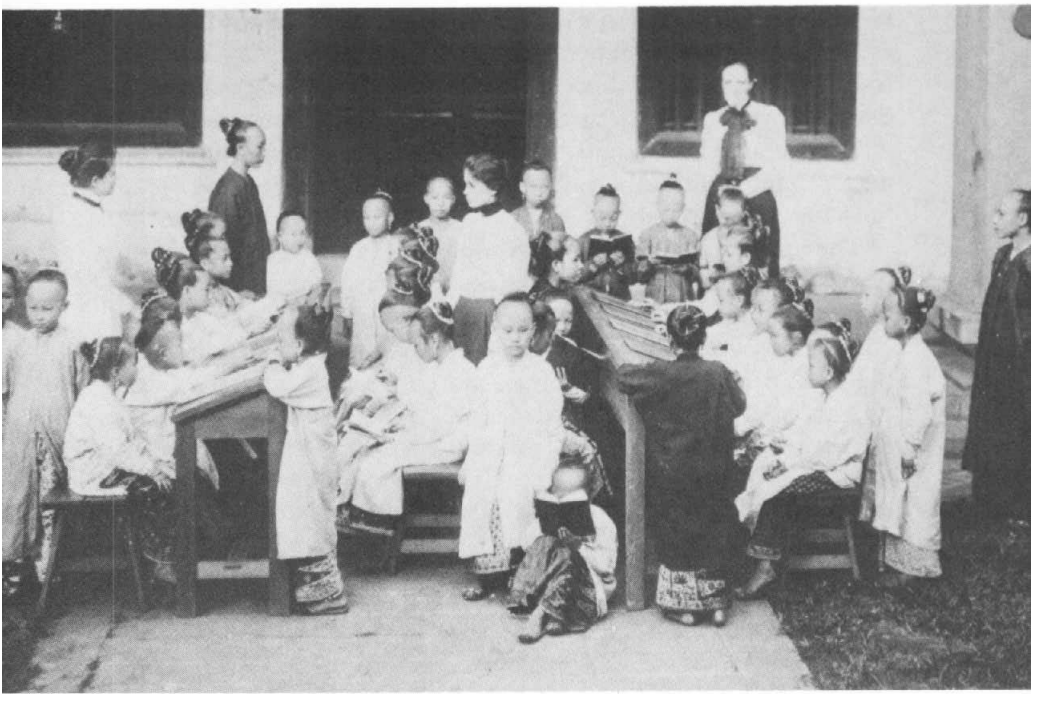
sentences, most convicts settled down to a useful life in Singapore. As with Chinese and Europeans, Indian men far outnumbered women because few Indian women came to Singapore before the 1860s. Some Indian Muslims married Malay women, however, and their descendants were known as Jawi-Peranakan (see Glossary).

The highly unbalanced sex ratio in Singapore contributed to a rather lawless, frontier atmosphere that the government seemed helpless to combat. Little revenue was available to expand the tiny police force, which struggled to keep order amid a continuous influx of immigrants, often from the fringes of Asian society. This tide of immigration was totally uncontrolled because Singapore's businessmen, desperate for unskilled laborers, opposed restriction on free immigration as vehemently as they resisted any restraint on free trade. Public health services were almost nonexistent, and cholera, malnutrition, smallpox, and opium use took a heavy toll in the severely overcrowded working-class areas.

Crown Colony, 1867–1918

After years of campaigning by a small minority of the British merchants, who had chafed under the rule of the Calcutta government, the Straits Settlements became a crown colony on April 1, 1867. Under the crown colony administration, the governor ruled with the assistance of executive and legislative councils. The Executive Council included the governor, the senior military official in the Straits Settlements, and six other senior officials. The Legislative Council included the members of the Executive Council, the chief justice, and four nonofficial members nominated by the governor. The numbers of nonofficial members and Asian council members gradually increased through the years. Singapore dominated the Legislative Council, to the annoyance of Malacca and Penang.

By the 1870s, Singapore businessmen had considerable interest in the rubber, tin, gambier, and other products and resources of the Malay Peninsula. Conditions in the peninsula were highly unstable, however, marked by fighting between immigrants and traditional Malay authorities and rivalry among various Chinese secret societies. Singapore served as an entrepôt for the resources of the Malay Peninsula and, at the same time, the port of debarkation for thousands of immigrant Chinese, Indians, Indonesians, and Malays bound for the tin mines and rubber plantations to the north. Some 250,000 Chinese alone disembarked in Singapore in 1912, most of them on their way to the Malay states or to the Dutch East Indies.



Singapore Malay family, nineteenth century
Courtesy Library of Congress
School for Singapore Chinese girls, nineteenth century
Courtesy Library of Congress

Although most Chinese immigrants merely passed through Singapore, the Chinese population of the island grew rapidly, from 34,000 in 1878 to 103,000 in 1888. The colonial government established the Chinese Protectorate in 1877 to deal with the serious abuses of the labor trade. William Pickering, the first appointed Protector of Chinese, was the first British official in Singapore who could speak and read Chinese. Pickering was given power to board incoming ships and did much to protect the newly arrived immigrants. In the early 1880s, he also extended his protection to Chinese women entering the colony by working to end forced prostitution. Because of his sympathetic approach and administrative ability, the protector soon spread his influence and protection over the whole Chinese community, providing arbitration of labor, financial, and domestic disagreements, thereby undermining some of the powers of the secret societies. Although no longer able to engage in illegal immigration practices, the societies continued to cause problems by running illegal gambling houses and supporting large-scale riots that often paralyzed the city. In 1889, Governor Sir Cecil Clementi-Smith sponsored a law to ban secret societies, which took effect the following year. The result was to drive the societies underground, where many of them degenerated into general lawlessness, engaging in extortion, gambling operations, gang fights, and robbery. The power of the secret societies, however, was broken.

The largest Chinese dialect group in the late nineteenth century were the Hokkien, who were traditionally involved in trade, shipping, banking, and industry. The next largest group, the Teochiu, engaged in agricultural production and processing, including gambier, pepper, and rubber production, rice and lumber milling, pineapple canning, and fish processing. Cantonese served as artisans and laborers and a few made their fortunes in tin. The two smallest groups, the Hakka and Hainanese, were mostly servants, sailors, or unskilled laborers. Because wealth was the key to leadership and social standing within the Chinese community at that time, the Hokkien dominated organizations such as the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and supplied most of the Chinese members of the Legislative Council and the Chinese Advisory Board. The latter, established in 1889 to provide a formal link between the British government of the colony and the Chinese community, served as a place to air grievances but had no power.

The affluent among Singapore's Chinese community increasingly saw their prosperity and fortunes tied to those of the crown colony and the British Empire. Western education, customs, and pastimes were adopted, and the sons of Chinese businessmen were

often sent to Britain for university training. The Straits Chinese British Association was formed in 1900 by Baba Chinese leaders to promote loyalty to the British Empire as well as to advance the education and welfare of Singapore's Chinese. Visiting British royalty were warmly received and British causes and victories enthusiastically supported. The Straits Chinese (see Glossary) contributed generously to the British war effort in World War I (1914–18).

Although the Chinese upper class, particularly the Straits-born Chinese, grew increasingly Westernized, the homeland exerted a continuing pull on its loyalties that increased during this period. Visits to China by Singapore Chinese became more common with the advent of steamship travel. The relaxation by the 1870s of China's law forbidding emigration (repealed in 1893) and the protection afforded Singaporeans by British citizenship made it relatively safe for prosperous businessmen to visit their homeland and return again to Singapore. Upper-class Singapore Chinese frequently sent their sons to school in China and encouraged them to find brides there, although they themselves had often married local women.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, China's ruling Qing dynasty began to take an interest in the Nanyang Chinese and sought to attract their loyalty and wealth to the service of the homeland. Chinese consulates were established in Singapore, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, and other parts of the Nanyang. Hoo Ah Kay was appointed Singapore's first consul in 1877. He and his successors worked diligently to strengthen the cultural ties of the Singapore Chinese to China by establishing a cultural club, a debating society, Singapore's first Chinese-language newspaper (*Lat Pau*), and various Chinese-language schools, in which the medium of instruction was Chinese. One of the most important functions of the consul, however, was to raise money for flood and famine relief in China and for the general support of the Qing government. With the upheaval in China following the Hundred Days' Reform Movement in 1898, and its suppression by the Qing conservatives, the Singapore Chinese and their pocketbooks were wooed by reformists, royalists, and revolutionaries alike. Sun Yat-sen founded a Singapore branch of the Tongmeng Hui, the forerunner of the Guomindang (Kuomintang—Chinese Nationalist Party), in 1906. Not until the successful Wuchang Uprising of October 10, 1911, however, did Sun receive the enthusiastic support of Singapore Chinese.

Much smaller than the Chinese community and less organized in the late nineteenth century was the Singapore Indian community. By 1880 there were only 12,000 Indians, including Hindus,

Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians, each group with its own temple, mosque, or church. South Indians tended to be shopkeepers or laborers, particularly dockworkers, riverboatmen, and drivers of the ox carts that were the major transport for goods to and from the port area. North Indians were usually clerks, traders, and merchants. Both groups came to Singapore expecting to return to their homeland and were even more transient than the Chinese.

Malays continued to be drawn to Singapore from all over the archipelago, reaching a population of 36,000 by 1901. Malay traders and merchants lost out in the commercial competition with Chinese and Europeans, and most Malay immigrants became small shopkeepers, religious teachers, policemen, servants, or laborers. The leadership positions in the Malay-Muslim community went to the Jawi-Peranakan, because of their facility in English, and to wealthy Arabs. In 1876 the first Malay-language newspaper of the region, *Jawi Peranakan,* was published in Singapore. Several other Malay-language journals supporting religious reform were begun in the early twentieth century, and Singapore became a regional focal point for the Islamic revival movement that swept the Muslim world at that time.

A number of events beginning in the late nineteenth century strengthened Singapore's position as a major port and industrial center. When the Suez Canal opened, the Strait of Malacca became the preferred route to East Asia. Steamships began replacing sailing ships, necessitating a chain of coaling stations, including Singapore. Most of the major European steamship companies had established offices in Singapore by the 1880s. The expansion of colonialism in Southeast Asia and the opening of Siam (as Thailand was known at that time) to trade under King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) brought even more trade to Singapore. The spread of British influence in Malaya increased the flow of rubber, tin, copra, and sugar through the island port, and Singapore moved into processing and light manufacturing, some of which was located on its offshore islands. To serve the growing American canning industry a tin smelter was built in 1890 on Pulau Brani (*pulau* means island). Rubber processing expanded rapidly in response to the demands of the young automobile industry. Oil storage facilities established on Pulau Bukum made it the supply center for the region by 1902.

In the early twentieth century, Singapore had expanded its financial institutions, communications, and infrastructure in order to support its booming trade and industry. British banks predominated, although by 1905 there were Indian, Australian, American, Chinese, and French-owned banks as well. Telegraph service

from India and Europe reached Singapore in 1870, and telephone service within Singapore was installed in 1879 and extended to Johore in 1882 (see Telecommunications, ch. 3). The more than sixty European-owned companies in the Straits Settlements crown colony in the 1870s were largely confined to Singapore and Penang. Far more prosperous were some of the Chinese firms in Singapore that were beginning to expand their business links throughout Asia.

Singapore's port facilities failed to keep up with its commercial development until the publicly owned Tanjong Pagar Dock Board (renamed Singapore Harbour Board in 1913) set about replacing old wharves and warehouses and installing modern machinery and a new graving dock (dry dock). Trucks gradually replaced ox carts for transporting goods from the harbor to the town, and by 1909 it was possible to travel from Singapore to Penang by train and railroad ferry. The Johore Causeway linked road and rail transportation between Singapore and the peninsula after 1923.

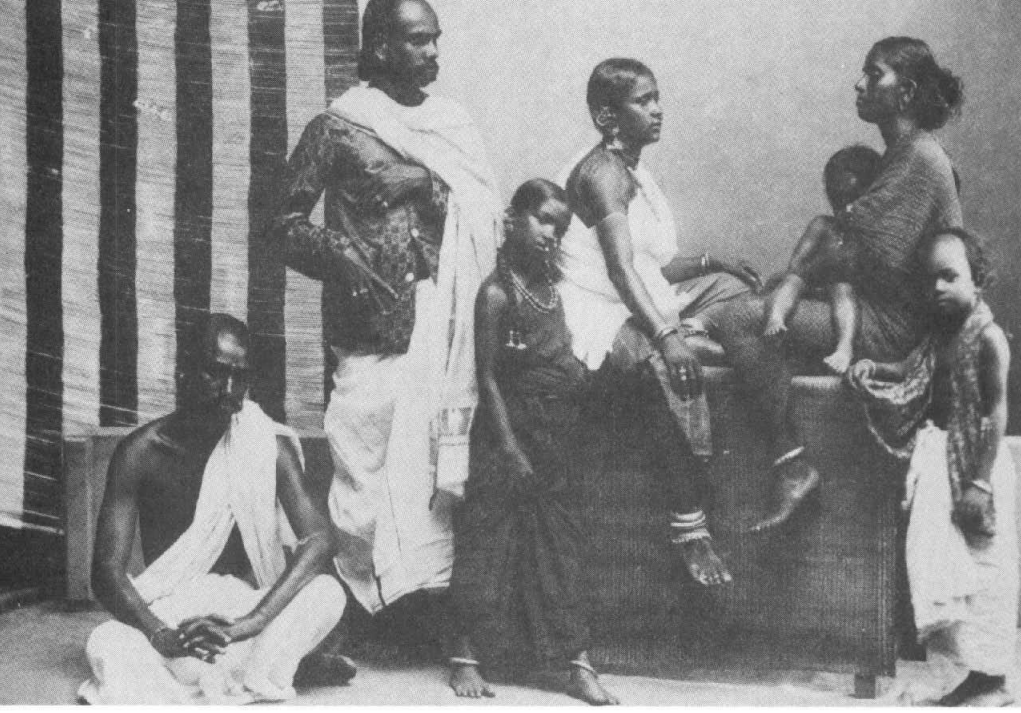
At the turn of the century, social advancement lagged far behind economic development in Singapore. While the wealthy enjoyed their social clubs, sports facilities, mansions, and suburban estates, the lower classes endured a grim existence marked by poverty, overcrowding, malnutrition, and disease. Malaria, cholera, and opium addiction were chiefly responsible for Singapore's mortality rate, which in 1896 was higher than that of Hong Kong, Ceylon, or India. A 1907 government commission to investigate the opium problem found that the majority of opium deaths were among the poor, who were reduced to smoking the dregs of used opium. Campaigns by missionaries and European-educated Chinese to ban opium use were successfully opposed by tax farmers and businessmen. By 1900 the opium tax provided one-half of the revenue of the colonial government, and both Asian and European businessmen resisted its replacement with an income tax. As an alternative, the government in 1910 took over all manufacture and sale of opium, setting up a factory at Pasir Panjang. Opium sales continued to constitute half of the government's revenue, but the most dangerous use of the drug had been curtailed.

Education was generally in a backward state. Most primary schools in which Malay, Chinese, or Tamil was the medium of instruction were of poor quality. English-language primary schools were mostly run by Christian missionaries, and the only secondary education was provided by Raffles Institution beginning in 1884. In 1902 the government formulated an Education Code, under which it took responsibility for providing English-language primary schools; the following year it took over Raffles Institution.

With the support of the Chinese community, the government opened a medical school in 1905 that had a first class of twenty-three students. Upgraded to the King Edward Medical College in 1920, the school formed the cornerstone of the future Singapore University. The affluent of Singapore sent their children to the English-language schools, which had steadily improved their standards. The brightest students vied for the Queen's Scholarships, founded in 1889, which provided for university education in Britain for Asian students. Many prosperous Asian families themselves sent their children to school in Britain. An English-language education at either the secondary or university level provided many Asians with the key to government, professional, or business employment. It also created a bond among the upper classes of all ethnic groups.

Under the leadership of reformist Chinese, Singapore's Chinese-language schools were also expanded and modernized at this time. A scientific curriculum was added to the traditional education in Chinese classics and Confucian morality. Students from Chinese-language schools often continued their education in China, where a school for Nanyang students had been opened in Nanjing in 1907 to prepare them for a role in Singapore's Chinese community. At the turn of the century, schools were even established in Singapore for Chinese women, who before that time had led severely sheltered lives under the domination of their husbands and mothers-in-law. By 1911 Chinese women were receiving instruction in Malay, English, Chinese, music, sewing, and cooking. Malay and Tamil-language primary schools continued to decline, and few students were able to progress from them to the English-language secondary level.

Responsibility for Singapore's defense had been a contentious issue between London and Singapore almost since its founding. The Singapore merchants resisted any attempts to levy taxes for fortifications and even objected to paying the cost of maintaining a small garrison on the island. In 1886 troubles with Russia over Afghanistan and worry over the Russian navy in the Pacific, prompted the British to begin fortifying the port area and building new barracks and other military facilities. The Singapore business community resisted strenuously London's proposal to double the colony's annual military contribution, insisting that the island was a critical link in the imperial chain. The colony, nonetheless, was required to pay a larger sum although slightly less than originally demanded. The British signed a defensive treaty with Japan in 1902. The Japanese defeat of the Russian navy in 1905 removed



Singapore Indian family, nineteenth century
Courtesy Library of Congress

that threat to Britain's seapower in Asia, thus enabling Britain to concentrate its navy in its home waters in response to a German naval buildup.

Singapore essentially sat out World War I. Fear that the island would be attacked by Germany's East Asiatic Squadron never materialized. Singapore's German business community, nonetheless, was rounded up and interned comfortably at their Teutonia Club. The only incident of the war period was the mutiny of Singapore's small garrison, the 800 troops of the Fifth Light Infantry Regiment. The regiment, composed entirely of Punjabi Muslims, was angered that Britain was at war with the Muslim Ottoman Empire. When the regiment was ordered to Hong Kong in February 1915, rumors spread through the unit that the troops were actually being sent to fight in France or Turkey. On the eve of its departure, the regiment mutinied, killed the officers, and terrorized the town. Within ten days the rebellion had been put down by a combined force of the Singapore Volunteer Artillery (a unit of 450 volunteers formed in 1914), police, Malay troops from Johore, the crews of British, French, Japanese, and Russian warships in port, and several hundred civilians. After the mutineers were rounded up, thirty-six were shot in public executions and the others were imprisoned or sent on active duty elsewhere.

Subsequently, hard feelings were created in Singapore's Indian community by a requirement that its members register with the government. A small British detachment was brought in to garrison the post for the rest of the war, with the aid of the Singapore Volunteer Artillery.

Between the World Wars, 1919–41

The Singapore economy experienced much the same roller-coaster effect that Western economies did in the period between the world wars. A postwar boom created by rising tin and rubber prices gave way to recession in late 1920 when prices for both dropped on the world market. By the mid-1920s, rubber and tin prices had soared again and fortunes were made overnight. Tan Kah Kee, who had migrated from Xiamen (Amoy) at age seventeen, reportedly made S$8 million (for value of the Singapore dollar—see Glossary) in 1925 in rubber, rice milling, and shipping; and Hakka businessman Aw Boon Haw earned the nickname "Tiger Balm King" for the multimillion-dollar fortune he made from the production and sale of patent medicines. Although they never amassed the great fortunes of Singapore's leading Asian businessmen, the prosperous European community increasingly lived in the style and comfort afforded by modern conveniences and an abundance of servants.

The Baba Chinese leaders focused their attention on improving educational opportunities, which meant lobbying for free English-language primary schools and more scholarships for English-language secondary schools. Although English-language schools expanded rapidly, most educated Straits-born Chinese studied at Chinese-language schools. Of the 72,000 children in Singapore schools in 1939, 38,000 were in Chinese schools, 27,000 in English schools, 6,000 in Malay schools, and 1,000 in Tamil schools (See Education, ch. 2).

The Straits-born Chinese increased their share of Singapore's Chinese population from 25 percent in 1921 to 36 percent in 1931. Chinese immigration was drastically cut by the Immigration Restriction Ordinance of 1930, which limited immigration of unskilled male laborers. Put in force to combat unemployment resulting from the Great Depression, the ordinance dropped the quota of Chinese immigrants from 242,000 in 1930 to 28,000 in 1933. Immigration was further restricted by the Aliens Ordinance of 1933, which set quotas and charged landing fees for aliens. Executive Council member Tan Cheng Lock and others bitterly opposed the policy in the Legislative Council as anti-Chinese.

The administration of the colony continued to be carried out by the governor and top-level officials of the Malayan Civil Service, posts that could be held only by "natural-born British subjects of pure European descent on both sides." The governor continued to consult with the Legislative Council, which included a handful of wealthy Asian business and professional leaders, who served as nonofficial members of the council. The mid-level and technical civil service positions were open to British subjects of all races. Very few Asians opposed the system, which gave the official members the majority on the legislative and executive councils. In the 1930s, Tan agitated unsuccessfully for direct popular representation and a nonofficial majority for the legislative council, but most Chinese were satisfied to devote their attention to commercial and professional affairs and the growing interest in nationalism in China.

The sympathies of even the Straits-born Chinese lay with their homeland in the period between the wars. A Singapore branch of the Guomindang was active for a few years beginning in 1912, and China-oriented businessmen led boycotts in 1915 against Japanese goods in response to Japan's Twenty-One Demands against China. These demands were a set of political and economic ultimatums, which if acceded to, would have made China a protectorate of Japan. Mass support for Chinese nationalism became more evident in 1919 when demonstrations, which turned violent, were staged in Singapore. In the early 1920s, Sun Yat-sen was successful in convincing Singapore's China-born businessmen to invest heavily in Chinese industry and to donate large sums of money for education in China. Tan Kah Kee contributed more than S$4 million for the founding of Amoy (Xiamen) University in 1924. The Guomindang also sent teachers and textbooks to Singapore and encouraged the use of Mandarin (or Guoyu) in Singapore's Chinese schools.

Although Mandarin was not the language of any of Singapore's major dialect groups, it was considered a unifying factor by the various Chinese leadership factions of both Singapore and China. Singapore's first Chinese secondary school, established by Tan in 1919, taught in Mandarin, as did a growing number of Chinese primary schools. In 1927 the Guomindang increased the number of promising students brought to China for university education and began a concerted effort to extend its control over Chinese schools in the Nanyang by supervising their curriculum and requiring the use of Mandarin. In the late 1920s, the colonial authorities had become increasingly aware of growing left-wing politics in the Chinese schools and sought to discourage the use of Mandarin as required by the Guomindang. By 1935, however, Mandarin

had become the medium of instruction in all of Singapore's Chinese schools.

Following the breakup of the short-lived collaboration between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party, the communists established a Nanyang Communist Party in 1928. Outlawed and harassed by the Singapore police, the party was reorganized in 1930 as the Malayan Communist Party (MCP—see Glossary), centered in Singapore. For the remainder of that year, it had some success in infiltrating teacher and student organizations and staging student strikes. In early 1931, however, the seizure by the police of an address book containing information on the newly organized party and its connections with the Far Eastern Bureau of the Communist International (Comintern—see Glossary) in Shanghai, led to arrests and the near destruction of the MCP by the following year. The Guomindang also had its problems during this period. The party's membership in Singapore had expanded rapidly until 1929, when the colonial administration banned the Singapore branch of the Guomindang and fund-raising for the party in China. Concerned about the increase of anticolonial propaganda, the Singapore government censored the vernacular press, severely restricted immigration, and cut off aid to Chinese and Tamil schools. During the 1930s, attempts by the communists and the Guomindang to organize labor and lead strikes were also suppressed by the colonial government.

Chinese nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiment in Singapore increased throughout the 1930s. The fortunes of both the Guomindang and the MCP rose with invasion of Manchuria by Japan in 1931 and the start of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. The Chinese Communist Party and the Guomindang formed a united front in December 1936 to oppose Japanese aggression. The Guomindang called upon the Nanyang Chinese for volunteer and financial support for the Republic of China, which had promulgated a Nationality Law in 1929, by which it claimed all persons of Chinese descent on the paternal side as Chinese nationals. Tan Kah Kee headed both the Nanyang Chinese National Salvation Movement and the Singapore Chinese General Association for the Relief of Refugees, as well as the fund-raising efforts for the homeland among the Malayan Chinese. Chinese government agents used the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and other local organizations to organize highly effective boycotts against Japanese goods. Singapore's Chinese also boycotted Malay or Indian shops selling Japanese goods, and Chinese merchants who ignored the boycott were severely punished by extremist groups.

The British authorities struggled vainly to control the tide of anti-Japanese feeling by forbidding anti-Japanese demonstrations and by banning importation of anti-Japanese textbooks from China, which was at war with Japan, and the teaching of anti-Japanese slogans and songs in Chinese schools. They were alarmed at the communist infiltration of the Nanyang Chinese National Salvation Movement and other Chinese patriotic groups. The banned MCP claimed a membership of more than 50,000 by early 1940. Although nominally partners in a united front in opposition to the Japanese, the MCP and the Guomindang competed for control of such organizations as the Nanyang Chinese Relief General Association. Nonetheless, Singapore's Chinese contributed generously to the support of the Chinese government.

World War II, 1941–45

The British had begun building a naval base at Singapore in 1923, partly in response to Japan's increasing naval power. The project was costly and unpopular, and construction of the base proceeded slowly until the early 1930s when Japan began moving into Manchuria and northern China. A major component of the base was completed in March 1938, when the King George VI Graving Dock was opened; more than 300 meters in length, it was the largest dry dock in the world at the time. The base, completed in 1941 and defended by artillery, searchlights, and the newly built nearby Tengah Airfield, caused Singapore to be ballyhooed in the press as the "Gibralter of the East." The floating dock, 275 meters long, was the third largest in the world and could hold 60,000 workers. The base also contained dry docks, giant cranes, machine shops, and underground storage for water, fuel, and ammunition. A self-contained town on the base was built to house 12,000 Asian workers, with cinemas, hospitals, churches, and seventeen soccer fields. Above-ground tanks held enough fuel for the entire British navy for six months. The only thing the giant naval fortress lacked was ships.

The Singapore naval base was built and supplied to sustain a siege long enough to enable Britain's European-based fleet to reach the area. By 1940, however, it was clear that the British fleet and armed forces were fully committed in Europe and the Middle East and could not be spared to deal with a potential threat in Asia. In the first half of 1941, most Singaporeans were unaffected by the war on the other side of the world, as they had been in World War I. The main pressure on the Straits Settlements was the need to produce more rubber and tin for the Allied war effort. Both the colonial government and British military command were for the most part convinced of Singapore's impregnability.

Even by late autumn 1941, most Singaporeans and their leaders remained confident that their island fortress could withstand an attack, which they assumed would come from the south and from the sea. Heavy fifteen-inch guns defended the port and the city, and machine-gun bunkers lined the southern coast. The only local defense forces were the four battalions of Straits Settlements Volunteer Corps and a small civil defense organization with units trained as air raid wardens, fire fighters, medical personnel, and debris removers. Singapore's Asians were not, by and large, recruited into these organizations, mainly because the colonial government doubted their loyalty and capability. The government also went to great lengths to maintain public calm by making highly optimistic pronouncements and heavily censoring the Singapore newspapers for negative or alarming news. Journalists' reports to the outside world were also carefully censored, and, in late 1941, reports to the British cabinet from colonial officials were still unrealistically optimistic. If Singaporeans were uneasy, they were reassured by the arrival at the naval base of the battleship *Prince of Wales,* the battle cruiser *Repulse,* and four destroyers on December 2. The fast and modern *Prince of Wales* was the pride of the British navy, and the *Repulse* was a veteran cruiser. Their accompanying aircraft carrier had run aground en route, however, leaving the warships without benefit of air cover (See Historical Development, ch. 5).

The Japanese Malaya Campaign

On December 8, 1941, the Japanese troops of two large convoys, which had sailed from bases in Hainan and southern Indochina, landed at Singora (now Songkhla) and Patani in southern Thailand and Kota Baharu in northern Malaya. One of Japan's top generals and some of its best trained and most experienced troops were assigned to the Malaya campaign. By the evening of December 8, 27,000 Japanese troops under the command of General Yamashita Tomoyuki had established a foothold on the peninsula and taken the British air base at Kota Baharu. Meanwhile, Japanese airplanes had begun bombing Singapore. Hoping to intercept any further landings by the Japanese fleet, the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* headed north, unaware that all British air bases in northern Malaya were now in Japanese hands. Without air support, the British ships were easy targets for the Japanese air force, which sunk them both on December 10.

The main Japanese force moved quickly to the western side of the peninsula and began sweeping down the single north-south road. The Japanese divisions were equipped with about 18,000 bicycles.

Whenever the invaders encountered resistance, they detoured through the forests on bicycles or took to the sea in collapsible boats to outflank the British troops, encircle them, and cut their supply lines. Penang fell on December 18, Kuala Lumpur on January 11, 1942, and Malacca on January 15. The Japanese occupied Johore Baharu on January 31, and the last of the British troops crossed to Singapore, blowing a fifty-meter gap in the causeway behind them.

Singapore faced Japanese air raids almost daily in the latter half of January 1942. Fleeing refugees from the peninsula had doubled the 550,000 population of the beleaguered city. More British and Commonwealth of Nations (see Glossary) ships and armed forces were brought to Singapore during January, but most were poorly trained raw recruits from Australia and India and inexperienced British troops diverted from the war in the Middle East. Singapore's Chinese population, which had heard rumors of the treatment of the Malayan Chinese by the invading Japanese, flocked to volunteer to help repel the impending invasion. Brought together by the common enemy, Guomindang and communist groups banded together to volunteer their services to Governor Shenton Thomas. The governor authorized the formation of the Chung Kuo Council (China National Council), headed by Tan Kah Kee, under which thousands volunteered to construct defense works and to perform other essential services. The colonial government also reluctantly agreed to the formation of a Singapore Chinese Anti-Japanese Volunteer Battalion, known as Dalforce for its commander, Lieutenant Colonel John Dalley of the Federated Malay States police force. Dalley put his volunteers through a ten-day crash training course and armed them with basic weapons, including shotguns, knives, and grenades.

From February 1–8, 1942, the two armies faced each other across the Johore Strait. The Japanese stepped up their air raids, bombing the airfields, naval base, and harbor area. Bombs also fell in the commercial and residential sections of the city, causing great destruction and killing and wounding many civilians. With their mastery of the skies, the Japanese could choose the time and place for invasion and maintain an element of surprise. Yamashita, however, had only 30,000 troops and limited ammunition available to launch against a British force of about 70,000 armed personnel. Lieutenant General Arthur E. Percival, Commander of Commonwealth forces in Malaya, commanded the defense of Singapore under the direction of General Archibald Wavell, the newly appointed commander in chief Far East, who was headquartered in Java. Percival's orders from British prime minister Winston

Churchill through Wavell called for defending the city to the death, while executing a scorched-earth policy: "No surrender can be contemplated . . . . every inch of ground . . . defended, every scrap of material or defences . . . blown to pieces to prevent capture by the enemy . . . ." Accordingly, the troops set about the task of destroying the naval base, now useless without ships, and building defense works along the northern coast, which lay totally unprotected.

On the night of February 8, using collapsible boats, the Japanese landed under cover of darkness on the northwest coast of Singapore. By dawn, despite determined fighting by Australian troops, they had two divisions with their artillery established on the island. By the next day the Japanese had seized Tengah Airfield and gained control of the causeway, which they repaired in four days. The British forces were plagued by poor communication and coordination, and, despite strong resistance by Commonwealth troops aided by Dalforce and other Chinese irregulars, the Japanese took Bukit Timah—the highest point on the island—on February 11. The British forces fell back to a final perimeter around the city, stretching from Pasir Panjang to Kallang, as Yamashita issued an invitation to the British to surrender. On February 13, the Japanese broke through the final perimeter at Pasir Panjang, putting the whole city within range of their artillery.

As many as 2,000 civilians were killed daily as the Japanese continued to bomb the city by day and shell it at night. Governor Thomas cabled London that "there are now one million people within radius of three miles. Many dead lying in the streets and burial impossible. We are faced with total deprivation of water, which must result in pestilence . . . ." On February 13, Percival cabled Wavell for permission to surrender, hoping to avoid the destruction and carnage that would result from a house-to-house defense of the city. Churchill relented and on February 14 gave permission to surrender. On the evening of February 15, at the Japanese headquarters at the Ford factory in Bukit Timah, Yamashita accepted Percival's unconditional surrender.

Shōnan: Light of the South

The Japanese occupied Singapore from 1942 until 1945. They designated it the capital of Japan's southern region and renamed it Shōnan, meaning "Light of the South" in Japanese. All European and Australian prisoners were interned at Changi on the eastern end of the island—the 2,300 civilians at the prison and the more than 15,000 military personnel at nearby Selarang barracks. The 600 Malay and 45,000 Indian troops were assembled by the Japanese and urged to transfer their allegiance to the emperor of

Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander in Southeast Asia, reading the order of the day following the Japanese surrender in September 1945
Courtesy National Archives
Parade celebrating return of British to Singapore in 1945
Courtesy National Archives

Japan. Many refused and were executed, tortured, imprisoned, or sent as forced laborers to Thailand, Sumatra, or New Guinea. Under pressure, about 20,000 Indian troops joined the Japanese-sponsored Indian National Army to fight for India's independence from the British.

The Asian civilian population watched with shock as their colonial rulers and supposed protectors were marched off to prison and the Japanese set about establishing their administration and authority. The Chinese were to bear the brunt of the occupation, in retribution for support given by Singapore Chinese to China in its struggle against Japan. All Chinese males from ages eighteen to fifty were required to report to registration camps for screening. The Japanese military police arrested those alleged to be anti-Japanese, meaning those who were singled out by informers or who were teachers, journalists, intellectuals, or even former servants of the British. Some were imprisoned, but most were executed, and estimates of their number range from 5,000 to 25,000. Many of the leaders of Singapore's anti-Japanese movement had already escaped, however, and the remnants of Dalforce and other Chinese irregular units had fled to the peninsula, where they formed the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army.

The harsh treatment by the Japanese in the early days of the occupation undermined any later efforts to enlist the support of Singaporeans for the Japanese vision of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, which was to comprise Japan, Korea, China, Manchukuo, and Southeast Asia. Singapore's prominent Chinese leaders and businessmen were further disaffected when the Japanese military command bullied them into raising a S$10 million "gift" to the Japanese as a symbol of their cooperation and as reparation for their support for the government of China in its war against Japan. The Chinese and English schools were pressured to use Japanese as the medium of instruction. The Malay schools were allowed to use Malay, which was considered the indigenous language. The Japanese-controlled schools concentrated on physical training and teaching Japanese patriotic songs and propaganda. Most parents kept their children at home, and total enrollment for all the schools was never more than 7,000. Although free Japanese language classes were given at night and bonuses and promotions awarded to those who learned the language, efforts to replace English and Chinese with Japanese were generally unsuccessful.

Serious disruption of not only the economy but the whole fabric of society marked the occupation years in Singapore. Food and essential materials were in short supply since the entrepôt trade that Singapore depended on to provide most goods was severely

curtailed by the war. Chinese businessmen collaborated with corrupt Japanese officials to establish a flourishing black market for most items, which were sold at outrageous prices. Inflation grew even more rampant as Japanese military scrip flooded the economy. Speculation, profiteering, bribery, and corruption were the order of the day, and lawlessness against the occupation government almost a point of honor.

As the war wound down and Japanese fortunes began to fade, life grew even more difficult in Shōnan. Military prisoners, who suffered increasing hardship from reduced rations and brutal treatment, were set to work constructing an airfield at Changi, which was completed in May 1945. Not only prisoners of war but also Singapore's unemployed civilians were impressed into work gangs for labor on the Burma-Siam railroad, from which many never returned. As conditions worsened and news of Japanese defeats filtered in, Singaporeans anxiously awaited what they feared would be a bloody and protracted fight to reoccupy the island. Although Japan formally surrendered to the Allies on August 15, 1945, it was not announced in the Singapore press until a week later. The Japanese military quietly retreated to an internment camp they had prepared at Jurong. On September 5, Commonwealth troops arrived aboard British warships, cheered by wildly enthusiastic Singaporeans, who lined the five-kilometer parade route. A week later, on the steps of the municipal building, the Japanese military command in Singapore surrendered to the supreme Allied commander in Southeast Asia, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten.

Aftermath of War, 1945–55

The abrupt end of the war took the British by surprise. Although the Colonial Office had decided on the formation of a Malayan Union, which would include all the Malay states, Penang, and Malacca, no detailed plans had been worked out for the administration of Singapore, which was to be kept separate and serve as the headquarters of the British governor general for Southeast Asia. Many former colonial officials and businessmen opposed the separation of Singapore from peninsular Malaya, arguing that the two were economically interdependent and to exclude Singapore would "cut the heart out of Malaya." The Colonial Office maintained that the separation did not preclude union at some future date, but that union should not be forced on "communities with such widely different interests." In September 1945, Singapore became the headquarters for the British Military Administration under Mountbatten. Although Singaporeans were relieved and happy at the arrival of the Commonwealth troops, their first-hand witnessing

of the defeat of the British by an Asian power had changed forever the perspective from which they viewed their colonial overlords.

Economic and Social Recovery

The British returned to find their colonies in sad shape. Food and medical supplies were dangerously low, partly because shipping was in total disarray. Allied bombing had taken its toll on Singapore's harbor facilities, and numerous wrecks blocked the harbor. Electricity, gas, water, and telephone services were in serious disrepair. Severe overcrowding had resulted in thousands of squatters living in shanties, and the death rate was twice the prewar level. Gambling and prostitution, both legalized under the Japanese, flourished, and for many opium or alcohol served as an escape from a bleak existence. The military administration was far from a panacea for all Singapore's ills. The British Military Administration had its share of corrupt officials who helped the collaborators and profiteers of the Japanese occupation to continue to prosper. As a result of the inefficiency and mismanagement of the rice distribution, the military administration was cynically known as the "Black Market Administration." However, by April 1946, when military rule was ended, the British Military Administation had managed to restore gas, water, and electric services to above their prewar capacity. The port was returned to civilian control, and seven private industrial, transportation, and mining companies were given priority in importing badly needed supplies and materials. Japanese prisoners were used to repair docks and airfields. The schools were reopened, and by March 62,000 children were enrolled. By late 1946, Raffles College and the King Edward Medical College both had reopened.

Food shortages were the most persistent problem; the weekly per capita rice ration fell to an all-time low in May 1947, and other foods were in short supply and expensive. Malnutrition and disease spawned outbreaks of crime and violence. Communist-led strikes caused long work stoppages in public transport, public services, at the docks, and at many private firms. The strikers were largely successful in gaining the higher wages needed by the workers to meet rising food prices.

By late 1947, the economy had begun to recover as a result of a growing worldwide demand for tin and rubber. The following year, Singapore's rubber production reached an all-time high, and abundant harvests in neighboring rice-producing countries ended the most serious food shortages. By 1949 trade, productivity, and social services had been restored to their prewar levels. In that year a five-year social welfare plan was adopted, under which benefits

were paid to the aged, unfit, blind, crippled, and to widows with dependent children. Also in 1949, a ten-year plan was launched to expand hospital facilities and other health services. By 1951 demand for tin and rubber for the Korean War (1950–53) had brought economic boom to Singapore.

By the early post-World War II years, Singapore's population had become less transitory and better balanced by age and sex. The percentage of Chinese who were Straits-born rose from 36 percent in 1931 to 60 percent by 1947, and, of those born in China, more than half reported in 1947 that they had never revisited and did not send remittances there. Singapore's Indian population increased rapidly in the postwar years as a result of increased migration from India, which was facing the upheavals of independence and partition, and from Malaya, where the violence and hardships of the anticommunist Emergency (see Glossary) caused many to leave. Although large numbers of Indian men continued to come to Singapore to work and then return to India, both Indians and Chinese increasingly saw Singapore as their permanent home.

In 1947 the colonial government inaugurated a ten-year program to provide all children with six years of primary education in the language of the parents' choice, including English, Malay, Chinese, and Tamil. Seeing an English education as offering their children the best opportunity for advancement, parents increasingly opted to send their children to English-language schools, which received increased government funding while support for the vernacular schools declined. In 1949 the University of Malaya was formed through a merger of Raffles College and the King Edward Medical College.

Political Awakening

The Colonial Office established an advisory council in November 1945 to work with the British Military Administration on the reconstruction of Singapore. Among the seventeen members appointed to the council was Wu Tian Wang, a former guerrilla leader and chairman of the communist Singapore City Committee. The MCP enjoyed great popularity in the early postwar days because of its association with the resistance and the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army, which also included many noncommunists. In January 1946, the anti-Japanese army was formally disbanded following a final parade at which Mountbatten presented medals to the guerrilla commander, Chin Peng, and the other resistance leaders. All arms and ammunition, which the guerrillas had received in airdrops from the British during the war or captured from the Japanese, were supposed to be surrendered at that

time. The MCP, however, secretly retained large stocks of its weapons.

The British legally recognized the MCP in late 1945, largely because of its resistance efforts and its popularity. The party by that time commanded about 70,000 supporters. The MCP at first concentrated its efforts on organizing labor, establishing the General Labour Union, which covered more than sixty trade unions. It organized numerous strikes in 1945 and early 1946, including a two-day general strike in January in which 173,000 workers struck and transport was brought to a halt. In February, after the formation of a Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions claiming 450,000 members in Singapore and the peninsula, the British Military Administration arrested twenty-seven leading communists, banishing ten of them without trial. Thereafter, the MCP adopted a lower profile of quietly backing radical groups that were working for constitutional changes and increasing its control over the labor movement.

In April 1946, the British Military Administation ended with the formation of the Malayan Union, at which time Singapore became a separate crown colony with a civil administration. The two entities continued to share a common currency, institutions of higher learning, and the administration of immigration, civil aviation, posts and telegraphs, and income tax. Opposition to the separation of Malaya and Singapore motivated the formation in December 1945 of Singapore's first indigenous political party, the Malayan Democratic Union. Although most leaders of the new party were not communist, there were several prominent communists among its founders, including Wu Tian Wang, who saw the Malayan Union as a threat to the vision of a communist, united Malayan republic. The Malayan Democratic Union proposed eventual inclusion of Singapore in an independent Malaya within the Commonwealth of Nations. Meanwhile, on the peninsula, conservative Malay leaders, who were concerned about provisions in the Malayan Union scheme that conferred equal political status on immigrant communities, formed the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) in March 1946. After various mass rallies, movements and countermovements, proposals and counterproposals, the British acceded to UMNO wishes. February 1948 marked the formation of the Federation of Malaya, which provided for the gradual assimilation of immigrants into a Malay state working toward independence under British guidance. Singapore remained a separate crown colony.

Elections in Singapore were scheduled for March 1948, at which time a new constitution would go into effect. That document called

for an Executive Council of colonial officials and a Legislative Council comprising nine officials and thirteen nonofficials, four nominated by the governor, three chosen by the chambers of commerce, and six elected by adult British subjects who had been resident in Singapore for one year prior to the election. The appointed governor retained power over certain items and veto power over the proceedings of the Legislative Council. The Malayan Democratic Union, by then a communist front organization, boycotted the elections and organized mass rallies opposing the new constitution. The moderate Progressive Party was formed in August 1947 by British-educated business and professional men who advocated gradual constitutional reform aimed at eventual self-government. Of the six elected seats on the Legislative Council, three were won by independents and three by Progressives, the only party to contest the elections. In the first municipal election in 1949, the Progressive Party won thirteen of the eighteen seats on the twenty-seven member municipal commission. Voter interest was very low in both elections, however, with only about 10 percent of those eligible registering to vote.

Meanwhile, the MCP had abandoned the moderate stance advocated by its secretary general Lai Teck, who was replaced in March 1947 by Chin Peng. Soon after, it was discovered that Lai Teck not only had disappeared with the party's funds but also had been a double agent, serving both the Japanese and the British. Following the establishment of the Federation of Malaya in February 1948, Singapore's communist leaders moved to the peninsula, where they reactivated the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army and began fomenting acts of violence and terrorism. This led to the declaration of a state of emergency in Malaya on June 18 and in Singapore a week later. Although the twelve-year struggle was largely confined to the peninsula, restrictions were placed on meetings and strikes, and the detention of individuals without trial was permitted under the Emergency regulations. The MCP was proscribed by the colonial government in Singapore, and the Malayan Democratic Union, fearing the same fate, voluntarily dissolved itself. Left-wing political movements were thus stifled, and the only political party that arose to challenge the Progressives was the Singapore Labour Party formed in 1948. Like the Progressive Party, its positions were moderate and its leadership mostly British educated. Nevertheless, as a result of personal squabbles and factions, the Singapore Labour Party had largely disintegrated by 1952.

The number of elected seats in the Legislative Council was increased to nine in 1951, and the Progressive Party won six of the

nine seats in the election that year. The membership of the party never numbered more than about 4,000, the majority of whom were upper or middle class and British educated. The interests of the members of the Legislative Council and the leadership of the Progressive Party were so closely aligned with those of the colonial government that they were out of touch with the masses. Participation in politics was restricted to Straits-born or naturalized British subjects who were literate in English. This exclusion of immigrants and those not educated in English meant that, in the late 1940s, about one-half of Singapore's adult population was disenfranchised.

Although the Chinese-educated took little interest in the affairs of the Legislative Council and the colonial government, they were stirred with pride by the success of the Chinese Communist Party in China. Fearful that support by Singapore's Chinese for the Chinese communists would translate to support for the MCP, the colonial government attempted to curtail contacts between the Singapore Chinese and their homeland. When Tan Kah Kee returned from a trip to China in 1950, the colonial government refused to readmit him, and he lived out his days in his native Fujian Province.

For graduates of Singapore's Chinese high schools, there were no opportunities for higher education in the colony. Many went to universities in China, despite the fact that immigration laws prohibited them from returning to Singapore. To alleviate this problem, wealthy rubber merchant and industrialist Tan Lark Sye proposed formation of a Chinese-language university for the Chinese-educated students of Singapore, Malaya, and other parts of Southeast Asia. Singaporean Chinese, rich and poor, donated funds to found Nanyang University, which was opened in Singapore in 1956.

By the early 1950s, large numbers of young men whose education had been postponed by the Japanese occupation were studying at Chinese-language high schools. These older students were particularly critical of the colonial government's restrictive policies toward Chinese and of its lack of support for Chinese-language schools. The teachers in these schools were poorly paid, the educational standards were low, and graduates of the schools found they could not get jobs in the civil service or gain entrance to Singapore's English-language universities. While critical of the colonial government, the students were becoming increasingly proud of the success of the communist revolution in China, reading with interest the publications and propaganda put out by the new regime.

As the Emergency on the peninsula began to go badly for the communists, the MCP took a renewed interest in Singapore and began organizing protest demonstrations among the disaffected students. Among the brightest and most capable of the older Chinese

Panoramic view of Singapore's waterfront in mid-1940s
Courtesy National Archives

high school students were Lim Chin Siong and Fong Swee Suan, who both became involved in organizing class boycotts that resulted in a police raid on the Chinese High School in 1952. The two left the school, took low-paying jobs at bus companies, and began working to build communist influence among workers and students. In May 1954, mass student protest demonstrations were organized to oppose a new National Service Ordinance requiring males between the ages of eighteen and twenty to register for part-time national service. Also in May, the Singapore Factory and Shop Workers' Union registered with the government, with Lim as its secretary general; Fong, who was by then general secretary of the Singapore Bus Workers' Union, and C.V. Devan Nair, of (at that time) the Singapore Teachers' Union, were members of the executive board. Dedicated and charismatic, Lim led several well-organized small strikes that were successful in gaining better conditions for the union's workers and in attracting thousands of recruits for the union. By late 1955, the Singapore Factory and Shop Workers' Union included thirty industrial unions and had a membership of about 30,000.

Road to Independence, 1955–65

In 1953 the colonial government appointed Sir George Rendel to head a commission to review the Singapore constitution and devise a "complete political and constitutional structure designed to enable Singapore to develop as a self-contained and autonomous unit in any larger organization with which it may ultimately become associated." The commission recommended partial internal self-government for Singapore, with Britain retaining control of internal security, law, finance, defense, and foreign affairs. It also proposed a single-chamber Legislative Assembly of thirty-two

members, twenty-five of whom would be elected, and a nine-member council of ministers that would act as a cabinet. The governor retained his power to veto legislation. The British government accepted the commission's recommendations, and the Rendel constitution went into effect in February 1954, with elections scheduled for the Legislative Assembly for April 1955. Voters were to be automatically registered, which was predicted to greatly enlarge the size of the turnout over previous elections. Although the new constitution was a long way from offering Singapore full independence, election fever gripped the country as new political alliances and parties were formed.

Two former members of the Singapore Labour Party, Lim Yew Hock and Francis Thomas, and a prominent lawyer, David Marshall, formed a new political party, the Labour Front, in July 1954. Marshall, who was a member of Singapore's small Jewish community, had studied law in Britain, fought with the Singapore Volunteer Corps during the Japanese invasion, and worked in the coal mines of Hokkaidō as a prisoner of war. Under the leadership of Marshall, a staunch anticolonialist, the party campaigned for immediate independence within a merged Singapore and Malaya, abolishing the Emergency regulations, Malayanization of the civil service within four years (by which time local officials would take over from colonial officials), multilingualism, and Singapore citizenship for its 220,000 China-born inhabitants. Marshall, a powerful speaker, promised "dynamic socialism" to counter "the creeping paralysis of communism" as he denounced colonialism for its exploitation of the masses.

People's Action Party

In November 1954, the People's Action Party (PAP—see Glossary) was inaugurated at a gathering of 1,500 people in Victoria Memorial Hall. The party was formed by a group of British-educated, middle-class Chinese who had returned to Singapore in the early 1950s after studying in Britain. Led by twenty-five-year-old Lee Kuan Yew, as secretary general, Toh Chin Chye, Goh Keng Swee, and S. Rajaratnam, the party sought to attract a following among the mostly poor and non-English-speaking masses. Lee had served as a legal adviser to a number of trade unions and, by 1952, had earned a reputation for his successful defense of the rights of workers. He also helped defend Chinese students arrested during the 1954 student demonstrations protesting national service. Lee, a fourth-generation Singaporean, was educated at Raffles Institution and Cambridge University, where he took a double first (first-class honors in two subjects) in law. Through his work with the

unions and student groups, Lee had made many contacts with anticolonialists, noncommunists and communists alike.

Present at the inauguration of the PAP were a number of noted communists and procommunists, including Fong Swee Suan and Devan Nair, who both joined the new party. Also present were Malayan political leaders Tunku Abdul Rahman, president of UMNO, and Sir Tan Cheng Lock, president of the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA). The PAP proposed to campaign for repeal of the Emergency regulations, union with Malaya, a common Malayan citizenship, Malayanization of the civil service, and free compulsory education. Ending colonialism, however, was the first priority of Lee and the PAP leadership, although they concluded this could be accomplished only with support from the Chinese-educated public and the communist-controlled trade unions. The PAP, calculating that a united front with the communists was necessary to end colonialism, declared itself noncommunist, neither pro- nor anticommunist, preferring to put off until after independence any showdown with the communists.

Meanwhile, two other political parties prepared to contest the upcoming election. The Progressive Party, whose leaders had earned a reputation as the "Queen's Chinese" for their procolonial positions and conservative economic policies, had little appeal for the masses of working-class Chinese who were newly enfranchised to vote in the 1955 election. Automatic registration of voters had increased the electorate from 76,000 in 1951 to more than 300,000. Shortly before the elections, wealthy and influential members of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce formed the new Democratic Party, which championed the causes of improved Chinese education, establishment of Chinese as an official language, and liberal citizenship terms for the China-born. Although these issues appealed to Singapore's China-born lower classes, this same group was disenchanted with the party's conservative economic platform, which closely resembled that of the Progressive Party.

Election fever gripped Singapore during the month-long campaign, and the results of the April 2 contest sent shock waves as far as Britain, where it had been expected that the Progressive Party would win handily. Surprising even itself, the Labour Front won ten of the twenty-five seats and formed a coalition government with the UMNO-MCA Alliance, which won three seats. Three ex-officio members and two nominated members joined with the coalition, forming a group of seventeen in the thirty-two-member assembly. The Progressives won only four seats and the Democratic Party just two, in a clear rejection of colonial rule and procolonial politics. The PAP won three of the four seats it had contested,

including a seat in one of Singapore's poorest sections won by Lee Kuan Yew and one seat won by Lim Chin Siong. Lim had the backing of organized labor and led the procommunist wing of the party while Lee led the noncommunist wing.

The Labour Front government, with David Marshall as Singapore's first chief minister, faced serious problems from the start. The communists launched a campaign of strikes and student unrest in an attempt to destabilize the government. Only about one-third of the 275 strikes called in 1955 were for better wages and working conditions; the remainder were sympathy strikes or strikes to protest imprisonment of labor union officials. Riots broke out on May 12 when police attempted to break up an illegal picket line formed by striking bus workers and Chinese school students. Four people were killed and thirty-one injured in that single incident, which became known as "Black Thursday." Although the government arrested some students, Marshall eventually backed down and agreed to the registration of the Singapore Chinese Middle School Students' Union because he was in sympathy with the students' grievances against the colonial education system. In registering their union, the students agreed to the condition that the union keep out of politics; the communist leaders of the union, however, had no intention of keeping the agreement.

Along with problems with labor and students, Marshall faced constant conflict with the colonial government over his determination not to be a figurehead controlled by the governor. When the governor, Sir Robert Black, refused to allow Marshall to appoint four assistant ministers, Marshall threatened to resign unless Singapore was given immediate self-government under a new constitution. The Colonial Office agreed to hold constitutional talks, which came to be known as *Merdeka* (freedom in Malay) talks, in London in April 1956. Marshall led to the talks a thirteen-man delegation comprising members of all the legislative parties and including Lee and Lim Chin Siong. The British offered to grant Singapore full internal self-government but wanted to retain control over foreign affairs and internal security. They proposed a Defence and Internal Security Council, with three delegates each from Britain and Singapore, to be chaired by the British high commissioner in Singapore, who would have the casting ballot (the deciding vote in case of a tie). Marshall had promised he would resign if he failed to obtain internal self-government, and the talks broke down over the issue of the casting ballot. The delegation returned to Singapore, and Marshall resigned in June and was succeeded by the deputy chief minister, Lim Yew Hock.

By July the Singapore Chinese Middle Schools Students' Union had begun planning a campaign of agitation against the government. The Lim Yew Hock government moved first, however, dissolving seven communist-front organizations, including the student union, and closing two Chinese middle schools. This touched off a protest sit-in at Chinese high schools organized by Lim Chin Siong that ended in five days of rioting in which thirteen people were killed. British troops were brought in from Johore to end the disturbance, and more than 900 people were arrested, including Lim Chin Siong, Fong Swee Suan, and Devan Nair. The British approved of the Singapore government's tough action toward the agitators, and when Lim Yew Hock led a delegation to London for a second round of constitutional talks in March 1957, the Colonial Office proposed a compromise on the internal security issue. The Singapore delegation accepted a proposal whereby the Internal Security Council would comprise three Singaporeans, three Britons, and one delegate from what was soon to be the independent Federation of Malaya, who would hold the casting ballot. The Singapore delegation returned to a hero's welcome; the Legislative Assembly accepted the proposals, and a delegation was scheduled to go to London in 1958 for a third and final round of talks on the new constitution.

Although the moderates led by Lee Kuan Yew retained control of the PAP Central Executive Committee, by 1956 the procommunists held sway over the membership and many of the mass organizations and PAP branches. At the annual general meeting in August 1957, the procommunists won six of the twelve seats on the committee. Lee Kuan Yew and the other moderates refused to take office in order to avoid becoming front men for the leftists. On August 21, the Lim Yew Hock government reacted to the situation by arresting thirty-five communists, including five of the new members of the PAP Central Executive Committee, some PAP branch officials, and labor and student leaders. Lee and the moderates were able to regain control of the party and, the following November, amended the party's constitution to consolidate moderate control by limiting voting for the Central Executive Committee to the full cadres (full members), who were literate Singapore citizens over the age of twenty-one who had been approved as cadres by the Central Executive Committee.

Meanwhile, the Lim Yew Hock government continued to make further progress on issues related to Singapore's self-government. The Citizenship Ordinance passed in 1957 provided Singapore citizenship for all born in Singapore or the Federation of Malaya and for British citizens of two years' residence; naturalization was

offered to those who had resided in Singapore for ten years and would swear loyalty to the government. The Legislative Assembly voted to complete Malayanization of the civil service within four years beginning in 1957. The Education Ordinance passed in 1957 gave parity to the four main languages, English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil. By 1958 the Ministry of Education had opened nearly 100 new elementary schools, 11 new secondary schools, and a polytechnic school and set up training courses for Malay and Tamil teachers.

Lim Yew Hock led the Singapore delegation to the third round of constitutional talks in April 1958. The talks resulted in an agreement on a constitution for a State of Singapore with full powers of internal government. Britain retained control over foreign affairs and external defense, with internal security left in the hands of the Internal Security Council. Only in the case of dire emergency could Britain suspend the constitution and assume power. In August 1958, the British Parliament changed the status of Singapore from a colony to a state, and elections for the fifty-one-member Legislative Assembly were scheduled for May 1959. Voting was made compulsory for all adult Singapore citizens, but the British refused to allow persons with records of subversive activity to stand for election. Ten parties contested the election, but none was as well organized as the PAP, which under Lee Kuan Yew ran a vigorous campaign with huge weekly rallies. Campaigning on a platform of honest efficient government, social and economic reform, and union with the Federation of Malaya, the PAP scored a stunning victory by winning forty-three of the fifty-one seats. The badly divided and scandal-ridden Labour Front had reorganized as the Singapore People's Alliance, which won four seats, including one for Lim Yew Hock. The remaining seats were won by three UMNO-MCA Alliance candidates and one independent. Marshall's Workers' Party failed to win any seats.

Both foreign and local businesses feared that the PAP victory signaled Singapore's slide toward communism, and many moved their headquarters to Kuala Lumpur. Lee indeed refused to take office until the eight procommunist PAP detainees arrested in 1956 and 1957 were released, and he appointed several of them, including Lim Chin Siong, Fong Swee Suan, and Devan Nair, to government posts. Lee's closest advisors, however, were moderates Goh Keng Swee, Toh Chin Chye, and S. Rajaratnam.

The first task of the new PAP government was to instill a sense of unity and loyalty in Singapore's diverse ethnic populace. A new national flag, crest, and anthem were introduced, and the new Ministry of Culture organized open-air cultural concerts and other

events designed to bring the three main ethnic groups together. Malay, Chinese, Tamil, and English were all made official languages, but, with its eye on a future merger with Malaya, the government made Malay the national language. Considered the indigenous people and yet the most disadvantaged, Malays were provided with free primary and secondary education.

After national unity, the second most important task facing the new government was that of transforming Singapore from an entrepôt economy dependent on the Malayan commodity trade with no tradition of manufacturing to an industrialized society. A four-year development plan, launched under Minister of Finance Goh Keng Swee in 1961, provided foreign and local investors with such incentives as low taxation rates for export-oriented manufactures, tax holidays for pioneer industries, and temporary protective tariffs against imports. The plan set aside a large area of swamp wasteland as an industrial estate in the Jurong area and emphasized labor-intensive industries, such as textiles. The overhaul of Singapore's economy was urgently needed in order to combat unemployment and pay for badly needed social services. One of the most serious problems was the lack of adequate housing. In 1960 the Housing and Development Board was set up to deal with the problems of slum clearance and resettlement. Under the direction of the banker and industrialist Lim Kim San, the board constructed more than 20,000 housing units in its first three years. By 1963 government expenditures on education had risen to S$10 million from S$600,000 in 1960.

Despite the signs of economic progress, the PAP leaders believed that Singapore's survival depended on merger with Malaysia. "Major changes in our economy are only possible if Singapore and the Federation are integrated as one economy," remarked Goh Keng Swee in 1960. "Nobody in his senses believes that Singapore alone, in isolation, can be independent," stated an official government publication that same year. The procommunists within the party, however, opposed merger because they saw little chance of establishing a procommunist government in Singapore as long as Kuala Lumpur controlled internal security in the new state. Meanwhile, the leaders of the conservative UMNO government in Kuala Lumpur, led by Tengku Abdul Rahman, were becoming increasingly resistant to any merger with Singapore under the PAP, which they considered to be extremely left wing.

Moreover, Malayan leaders feared merger with Singapore because it would result in a Chinese majority in the new state. When a fiercely contested Singapore by-election in April 1961 threatened to bring down the Lee Kuan Yew government, however, Tengku

Abdul Rahman was forced to consider the possibility that the PAP might be replaced with a procommunist government, a "Cuba across the causeway."

Accordingly, on May 27, 1961, in a speech in Kuala Lumpur to the Foreign Correspondents' Association, Tengku Abdul Rahman made a surprise proposal of an association of states that would include the Federation of Malaya, the British Borneo territories, and Singapore. In this proposed Malaysia, the Malay population of Sarawak and North Borneo (now Sabah) would offset numerically the Singapore Chinese, and the problem of a possible "Cuba across the causeway" would be solved.

The proposal, however, led almost immediately to a split between the moderate and procommunist forces within the PAP. In July Lee demanded and received a vote of confidence on the issue of merger from the Legislative Assembly. Following the vote, Lee expelled sixteen rebel PAP assembly members from the party along with more than twenty local officials of PAP. In August the rebel PAP assembly members formed a new opposition party, the Barisan Sosialis (The Socialist Front—see Glossary) with Lim Chin Siong as secretary general. The new party had considerable support among PAP local officials as well as at the grass-roots level. Of the fifty-one branch committees, thirty-five defected to Barisan Sosialis, which also controlled two-thirds of organized labor.

The battle lines were clearly drawn when Lee Kuan Yew announced a referendum on the question of merger to be held in September 1962. Lee launched a campaign of thirty-six radio broadcasts in three languages to gain support for the merger, which was opposed by the Barisan Sosialis as a "sell-out." Of the three merger plans offered on the referendum, the PAP plan received 70 percent of the votes, the two other plans less than 2 percent each, and 26 percent of the ballots were left blank.

Having failed to stop the merger at home, the Barisan Sosialis turned its efforts abroad, joining with left-wing opposition parties in Malaya, Sarawak, Brunei, and Indonesia. These parties were opposed to the concept of Malaysia as a "neocolonialist plot," whereby the British would retain power in the region. President Sukarno of Indonesia, who had entertained dreams of the eventual establishment of an Indonesia Raya (Greater Indonesia) comprising Indonesia, Borneo, and Malaya, also opposed the merger; and in January 1963 he announced a policy of Confrontation (Konfrontasi—see Glossary) against the proposed new state. The Philippines, having revived an old claim to Sabah, also opposed the formation of Malaysia. The foreign ministers of Malaya, Indonesia, and the Philippines met in June 1963 in an attempt to

work out some solution. Malaya agreed to allow the United Nations (UN) to survey the people of Sabah and Sarawak on the issue, although it refused to be bound by the outcome. Brunei opted not to join Malaysia because it was unable to reach agreement with Kuala Lumpur on the questions of federal taxation of Brunei's oil revenue and of the sultan of Brunei's relation to the other Malay sultans.

Singapore as Part of Malaysia

The leaders of Singapore, Malaya, Sabah, and Sarawak signed the Malaysia Agreement on July 9, 1963, under which the Federation of Malaysia was scheduled to come into being on August 31. Tengku Abdul Rahman changed the date to September 16, however, to allow the UN time to complete its survey. On August 31, Lee declared Singapore to be independent with the PAP government to act as trustees for fifteen days until the formation of Malaysia on September 16. On September 3, Lee dissolved the Legislative Assembly and called for a new election on September 21, to obtain a new mandate for the PAP government. In a bitterly contested campaign, the Barisan Sosialis denounced the merger as a "sell-out" and pledged increased support for Chinese education and culture. About half of Barisan's Central Executive Committee, including Lim Chin Siong, were in jail, however, following mass arrests the previous February by the Internal Security Council of political, labor, and student leaders who had supported a rebellion in Brunei. The mass arrests, although undertaken by the British and Malayans, benefited the PAP because there was less opposition. The party campaigned on its economic and social achievements and the achievement of merger. Lee visited every corner of the island in search of votes, and the PAP won thirty-seven of the fifty-one seats while the Barisan Sosialis won only thirteen.

On September 14, the UN mission had reported that the majority of the peoples of Sabah and Sarawak were in favor of joining Malaysia. Sukarno immediately broke off diplomatic and trade relations between Indonesia and Malaysia, and Indonesia intensified its Confrontation operations. Singapore was particularly hard hit by the loss of its Indonesian barter trade. Indonesian commandos conducted armed raids into Sabah and Sarawak, and Singaporean fishing boats were seized by Indonesian gunboats. Indonesian terrorists bombed the Ambassador Hotel on September 24, beginning a year of terrorism and propaganda aimed at creating communal unrest in Singapore. The propaganda campaign was effective among Singapore Malays who had hoped that merger with Malaysia would bring them the same preferences in employment and obtaining

business licenses that were given Malays in the Federation. When the PAP government refused to grant any economic advantages other than financial aid for education, extremist UMNO leaders from Kuala Lumpur and the Malay press whipped up antigovernment sentiment and racial and religious tension. On July 21, 1964, fighting between Malay and Chinese youths during a Muslim procession celebrating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday erupted into racial riots, in which twenty-three people were killed and hundreds injured. In September Indonesian agents provoked communal violence in which 12 people were killed and 100 were injured. In Singapore, which normally prided itself on the peace and harmony among its various ethnic groups, shock and disbelief followed in the wake of the violence. Both Lee Kuan Yew and Tengku Abdul Rahman toured the island in an effort to restore calm, and they agreed to avoid wrangling over sensitive issues for two years.

The first year of merger was also disappointing for Singapore in the financial arena. No progress was made toward establishing a common market, which the four parties had agreed would take place over a twelve-year period in return for Singapore's making a substantial development loan to Sabah and Sarawak. Each side accused the other of delaying on carrying out the terms of the agreement. In December 1964, Kuala Lumpur demanded a higher percentage of Singapore's revenue in order to meet defense expenditures incurred fighting Confrontation and also threatened to close the Singapore branch of the Bank of China, which handled the financial arrangements for trade between Singapore and China as well as remittances.

Political tensions between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur also escalated as each began getting involved in the politics of the other. UMNO ran candidates in Singapore's September 1963 elections, and PAP challenged MCA Alliance candidates in the Malaysian general election in April 1964. UMNO was unable to win any seats in the Singapore election, and PAP won only one seat on the peninsula. The main result was increased suspicion and animosity between UMNO and PAP and their respective leaders. In April 1965, the four Alliance parties of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak merged to form a Malaysian National Alliance Party. The following month, the PAP and four opposition parties from Malaya and Sarawak formed the Malaysian Solidarity Convention, most of whose members were ethnic Chinese. Although the Malaysian Solidarity Convention claimed to be noncommunal, right-wing UMNO leaders saw it as a Chinese plot to take over control of Malaysia. In the following months, the situation worsened increasingly, with abusive speeches and writings on both sides. Faced with

demands for the arrest of Lee Kuan Yew and other PAP leaders by UMNO extremists, and fearing further outbreaks of communal violence, Tengku Abdul Rahman decided to separate Singapore from Malaysia. Informed of his decision on August 6, Lee tried to work out some sort of compromise, without success. On August 9, with the Singapore delegates not attending, the Malaysian parliament passed a bill favoring separation 126 to 0. That afternoon, in a televised press conference, Lee declared Singapore a sovereign, democratic, and independent state. In tears he told his audience, "For me, it is a moment of anguish. All my life, my whole adult life, I have believed in merger and unity of the two territories."

Two Decades of Independence, 1965-85

Reaction to the sudden turn of events was mixed. Singapore's political leaders, most of whom were Malayan-born and still had ties there, had devoted their careers to winning independence for a united Singapore and Malaya. Although apprehensive about the future, most Singaporeans, however, were relieved that independence would probably bring an end to the communal strife and riots of the previous two years. Moreover, many Singaporean businessmen looked forward to being free of Kuala Lumpur's economic restrictions. Nonetheless, most continued to worry about the viability as a nation of a tiny island with no natural resources or adequate water supply, a population of nearly 2 million, and no defense capability of its own in the face of a military confrontation with a powerful neighboring country. Singaporeans and their leaders, however, rose to the occasion.

Under Lee Kuan Yew

The Lee Kuan Yew government announced two days after separation that Singapore would be a republic, with Malay as its national language and Malay, Chinese, English, and Tamil retained as official languages. The Legislative Assembly was renamed the Parliament, and the prominent Malay leader, Yusof bin Ishak, was made president of the republic. The new nation, immediately recognized by Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, was admitted to the UN in September and the Commonwealth the following month. In the early months following separation, Singapore's leaders continued to talk of eventual reunion with Malaysia. Wrangling between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur over conflicting economic, defense, and foreign policies, however, soon put an end to this discussion, and Singapore's leaders turned their attention to building an independent nation.

The government sought to build a multiracial and multilingual society that would be unified by a sense of a unique "Singaporean identity." The government established a Constitutional Commission on Minority Rights in late 1965, and official policy encouraged ethnic and cultural diversity. Foreign Minister Rajaratnam told the UN General Assembly that year, "If we of the present generation can steadfastly stick to this policy for the next thirty years, then we would have succeeded in creating a Singaporean of a unique kind. He would be a man rooted in the cultures of four great civilizations but not belonging exclusively to any of them." Integrated schools and public housing were the principle means used by the government to ensure a mixing of the various ethnic groups. The government constructed modern high-rise housing estates and new towns, in which the residents of the city's crowded Chinatown slums and the rural Malay kampongs (villages in Malay) were thoroughly intermingled. An English-language education continued to be the preferred preparation for careers in business, industry, and government; English-language pupils outnumbered Chinese-language pupils 300,000 to 130,000 by 1968. Malay-language primary school enrollment declined from 5,000 in 1966 to about 2,000 in 1969. All students, however, were required to study their mother tongue at least as a second language. Many of the country's British-educated leaders, including Lee Kuan Yew, sent their children to Chinese-language schools because they believed that they provided better character training. The government stressed discipline and the necessity of building a "rugged society" in order to face the challenges of nationhood. A government anticorruption campaign was highly effective in combating that problem at all levels of administration.

At the same time that the government addressed the problem of establishing a national identity, it also tackled the serious economic problems facing the new nation. The hopes pinned on establishing a common market with Malaysia were dead, and it was clear that Singapore would not only have to go it alone but also would face rising tariffs and other barriers to trade with Malaysia. Under Goh Keng Swee and other able finance ministers, the government worked hard to woo local and foreign capital. New financial inducements were provided to attract export industries, promote trade, and end the country's dependence on Britain as the major source of investment capital. The generally prosperous world economic situation in the mid-1960s favored Singapore's growth and development. Confrontation with Indonesia had ended by 1966 after Soehárto came to power, and trade between the two countries resumed. Trade with Japan and the United States

increased substantially, especially with the latter as Singapore became a supply center for the United States in its increasing involvement in Indochina.

A serious problem the government had to deal with in order to attract large-scale investment was Singapore's reputation for labor disputes and strikes. "The excesses of irresponsible trade unions . . . are luxuries which we can no longer afford," stated President Yusof bin Ishak in December 1965, speaking for the government. Two events in 1968 enabled the government to pass stricter labor legislation. In January Britain announced its intention to withdraw from its bases in Singapore within three years. Aside from the defense implications, the news was sobering because British spending in Singapore accounted for about 25 percent of Singapore's gross national product (GNP—see Glossary) for a total of about S$450 million a year, and the bases employed some 21,000 Singapore citizens. The government called an election for April in order to gain a new mandate for facing the crisis. Unopposed in all but seven constituencies, the PAP made a clean sweep, winning all fifty-eight parliamentary seats. With the new mandate, the government passed in August new labor laws that were tough on workers and employers alike. The new legislation permitted longer working hours, reduced holidays, and gave employers more power over hiring, firing, and promoting workers. Workers could appeal actions they considered unjust to the Ministry of Labour, and employers were obligated to increase their contributions to the Central Provident Fund. Workers also were given for the first time sick leave and unemployment compensation. As a result of the new legislation, productivity increased, and there were no strikes in 1969.

With labor relations under control, the government set up the Jurong Town Corporation to develop Jurong and the other industrial estates (see Land Management and Development, ch. 3). By late 1970, 271 factories in Jurong employed 32,000 workers, and there were more than 100 factories under construction. Foreign investors were attracted by the improved labor situation and by such incentives as tax relief for up to five years and unrestricted repatriation of profits and capital in certain government-favored industries. United States firms flocked to invest in Singapore, accounting for 46 percent of new foreign capital invested in 1972. Companies from Western Europe, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Australia also invested capital, and by 1972 one quarter of Singapore's manufacturing firms were either foreign-owned or joint-venture companies. Another attraction of Singapore for foreign capital was the region's petroleum resources. Singapore

was the natural base for dozens of exploration, engineering, diving, and other support companies for the petroleum industry in nearby Indonesia, as well as being the oil storage center for the region. By the mid-1970s, Singapore was the third largest oil-refining center in the world.

The government turned to advantage the British pullout by converting some of the military facilities to commercial and industrial purposes and retraining laid-off workers for new jobs. The former King George VI Graving Dock was converted to the Sembawang Shipyard, employing 3,000 former naval base workers in ship building and ship repair. Singapore also moved into shipping in 1968 with its own Neptune Orient Line. A container complex built in 1972 made the country the container transshipment center of Southeast Asia. By 1975 Singapore was the world's third busiest port behind Rotterdam and New York.

By the early 1970s, Singapore not only had nearly full employment but also faced labor shortages in some areas. As a result, immigration laws and work permit requirements were relaxed somewhat, and by 1972 immigrant workers made up 12 percent of the labor force (see Manpower and Labor, ch. 3). In order to develop a more highly skilled work force that could command higher wages, the government successfully courted high-technology industries, which provided training in the advanced skills required. Concerned that the country's economic success not be diluted by overpopulation, the government launched a family planning program in 1966 (see Population, ch. 2).

The country's economic success and domestic tranquility, which contrasted so starkly with the impoverished strife-torn Singapore of the late 1940s, was not purchased without cost, however. Although not a one-party state, the government was virtually under the total control of the PAP, and the Lee Kuan Yew administration did not hesitate to block the rise of an effective opposition. Holding a monopoly on power and opportunity in a small state, the party could easily co-opt the willing and suppress dissenters. The traditional bases—student and labor organizations—used by opposition groups in the past were tightly circumscribed. Control of the broadcast media was in the hands of the government, and economic pressures were applied to any newspapers that became too critical. The government leadership had adopted a paternalistic viewpoint that only those who had brought the nation through the perilous years could be trusted to make the decisions that would keep Singapore on the narrow path of stability and prosperity. The majority of Singaporeans scarcely dissented from this view and left the planning and decision making to the political leadership.

A People's Action Party (PAP) rally during the 1984 election
Courtesy Singapore Ministry of Communications and Information

Although five opposition parties contested the 1972 elections and won nearly one-third of the popular vote, the PAP again won all of the seats.

Although admired for its success, Lee's government increasingly attracted criticism from the international press for its less than democratic style. Singapore's neighbors also resented the survival-oriented nature of the country's foreign and economic policies. The aggressive defense policy recommended by Singapore's Israeli military advisers irritated and alarmed Muslim Indonesia and Malaysia (see Historical Development, ch. 5). Resentful of the profits made by Singapore in handling their commodities, Malaysia and Indonesia began setting up their own rubber-milling and petroleum-servicing industries. In the early 1970s, Malaysia and Singapore separated their joint currency, stock exchange, and airlines.

A regional political grouping, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN—see Glossary), founded in 1967 by Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, had little impact by the early 1970s on the foreign and economic policies of the member nations. However, regional and world developments in the 1970s, including the fall of Indochina to communism and

the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, steered Singapore and its neighbors toward a new spirit of cooperation.

Toward New Leadership

Singapore successfully pursued its foreign policy goal of improved relations with Malaysia and Indonesia in the early 1980s as Lee Kuan Yew established cordial and productive personal relations with both Soeharto and Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad. Cooperation agreements were reached between Singapore and Malaysia on joint civil service and military training programs. The economic interdependence of the two countries was reaffirmed as Singapore continued its role as the reexport center for the tin, rubber, lumber and other resources of the Malaysian hinterland, as well as becoming a major investor in that country's economy.

Throughout the early 1980s, Singapore headed the ASEAN drive to find a solution to the Cambodia problem. Beginning in 1979, the ASEAN countries sponsored an annual resolution in the UN calling for a withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and a political settlement on Cambodia. In 1981 Singapore hosted a successful meeting of the leaders of the three Khmer liberation factions, which led to the formation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea the following year.

During the first half of the 1980s, the Singapore economy continued to grow steadily, despite a worldwide recession. The economic growth rate of about 10 percent in 1980 and 1981 dipped to 6.3 percent in 1982 but rebounded to 8.5 percent with only 2.7 percent inflation in 1984. In his 1984 New Year's message to the nation, Lee Kuan Yew attributed Singapore's high economic growth rate, low inflation, and full employment during the period to its hardworking work force, political stability and efficient administration, regional peace, and solidarity in ASEAN. Singapore's successful economic strategy included phasing out labor-intensive industries in favor of high-technology industries, which would enhance the skills of its labor force and thereby attract more international investment.

Although Lee Kuan Yew retained a firm grip on the reins of government during the second decade of the country's independence,the shift in leadership had been irrevocably set in motion. By the early 1980s, a second generation of leaders was beginning to occupy the important decision-making posts. The stars of the new team included Goh Chok Tong, Tony Tan, S. Dhanabalan, and Ong Teng Cheong, who were all full ministers in the government by 1980. In that year, the PAP won its fourth consecutive general election, capturing all the seats. Its 75.6 percent vote

margin was five points higher than that of the 1976 election. The PAP leadership was shaken out of its complacency the following year, however, when Workers' Party candidate J. B. Jeyaretnam won with 52 percent of the votes the by-election to fill a vacancy in Anson District. In the general election held in December 1984, Jeyaretnam retained his seat and was joined on the opposition benches by Chiam See Tong, the leader of the Singapore Democratic Party, which was founded in 1980.

In September 1984, power in the PAP Central Executive Committee was transferred to the second-generation leaders, with only Lee Kuan Yew, as secretary general, remaining of the original committee members. When Lee hinted in 1985 that he was considering retirement, his most likely successor appeared to be Goh Chok Tong, serving then as first deputy prime minister and defence minister. Speculation also centered on the prime minister's son, Lee Hsien Loong, who had resigned his military career to win a seat in Parliament in the 1984 election. After two decades of the highly successful, but tightly controlled, administration of Lee Kuan Yew, it was difficult to say whether the future would bring a more open and participatory government, yet one with the same knack for success exhibited by the old guard. The answer to that question would only come with the final passing of Lee Kuan Yew from the political scene.

* * *

The early history of Singapore is treated most extensively in works on the Malay peninsula, particularly in the various issues of the *Journal of the Malaysian Branch, Royal Asiatic Society.* Of special interest is a commemorative volume, *150th Anniversary of the Founding of Singapore,* which includes reprints of articles on Singapore from previous issues of the journal. Three monographs that treat Singapore within the Malayan context from prehistory to the modern period are Tan Ding Eing's *A Portrait of Malaysia and Singapore,* N.J. Ryan's *The Making of Modern Malaysia and Singapore,* and K.G. Tregonning's *A History of Modern Malaysia and Singapore. Prince of Pirates,* by Carl A. Trocki, gives an interesting glimpse into the world of the early nineteenth-century Malay rulers of Singapore. The forty years during which Singapore was ruled from India as one of the Straits Settlements is well covered in *The Straits Settlements, 1826–67* by Constance M. Turnbull.

Turnbull is also the author of the standard work focusing solely on Singapore, *A History of Singapore, 1819–1975.* Another useful work covering the same period is F.J. George's, *The Singapore Saga.*

Two interesting works, both written in the early twentieth century, view nineteenth-century Singapore from different perspectives. *One Hundred Years of Singapore,* edited by Walter Makepeace, et al., deals with the history of the colonial government, whereas Song Ong Siang's *One Hundred Years' History of the Chinese in Singapore* covers the life and times of prominent Chinese Singaporeans.

For works focused on postwar Singapore, see *Conflict and Violence in Singapore and Malaysia, 1945-1983* by Richard L. Clutterbuck and *Singapore: Struggle for Success* by John Drysdale. An interesting pictorial history is *Singapore: An Illustrated History, 1941-1984,* published by the Singapore Ministry of Culture. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)